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Great Modern Sermons

Great Modern Sermons

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EDITED BY

HOBART D. MCKEEHAN, S. T. M.

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Preface

A SELECTION of really great sermons, like an anthology of poetry, is a treasure-store of sentiment and thought. Both the lay reader and the student of homiletics may profit by the reading. Here are perfect models open to analysis and review, and the reader may glance before and after in the pursuit of the author's thoughts and inspirations. These models represent not the great sermons of yesterday, but of to-day.

No such volume of representative character has thus far appeared, though there are numerous collections of sermons of the decades past. One must keep up with the changing trend of style in rhetoric and composition. For example, the sermons of the past depended on form and technical composition, whereas the sermon of to-day tends toward directness and simplicity as the route to power. We have in this volume made the humble venture to collect what is representative of the best in modern homiletics, as opposed to the formal, well-divided, and sometimes laborious classic of the older school.

Although the editor has exercised his own judgment in the selection of preachers who have made

their contributions, he has, in most instances, permitted each contributor to choose the sermon representative of his best pulpit efforts. In several cases a number of manuscripts were submitted by contributors and the choice lay entirely with the editor.

No two editors would probably agree as to the list of the ten or twelve supreme preachers of this generation. But to produce the selection a decision had to be made. The basis of choice has been laid upon the consensus of opinion, the verdict of scholars, and of a world that loves inspired preaching. No formal rhetoric or other rule of homiletic art will have half as much force as the power of example, of good models. These splendid creations of our modern preachers are not intended to dazzle or to be slavishly imitated or to submerge one's individuality. They are meant rather to create new thought and fresh devotion to the ministry, and to stimulate to a higher order of effort. The compiler will be well rewarded if this object is fulfilled, even in small degree.

Regret is recorded that Dr. William Lonsdale Watkinson, the greatest surviving preacher of the Victorian era, owing to advanced age and illness, has been unable to prepare and submit the manuscript of sermon which we intended to include in this volume. Thanks are due my esteemed friend, Rev. S. Parkes Cadman, D. D., who consulted Dr. Watkinson personally, and reported his inability to

make a contribution. Dr. Watkinson's sermons offer almost incomparable models, and we can do no better than commend to the reader his latest volume, "The Shepherd of the Sea" (Revell).

HOBART DEITRICH MCKEEHAN.

Dallastown, Pa.

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I

RELIGIOUS REVIVALS

By

ERNEST WILLIAM BARNES, M. A., F. R. A. S.,

Canon of Westminster.

Ernest William Barnes was born April 1, 1874. He received his education at King Edward's School, Birmingham, and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1902 he was ordained as an Anglican clergyman. He was Select Preacher to Cambridge in 1906 and Oxford 1914-1916 and has been Canon of Westminster since 1918. Canon Barnes is a famous scientist and has become a no less famous preacher. The distinctive quality of his mind is an invaluable asset not simply to the Church of England, but to all Protestantism.

I

RELIGIOUS REVIVALS¹

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."—ROMANS 8: 14.

ALL religious people ought to be glad when others feel themselves called to serve and worship God. Yet many among us regard the sudden appearance of religious enthusiasm with critical coldness or open hostility. Such Christians instinctively show the temper of men of the world who have no active religious faith. The worldly are almost invariably contemptuous of, or angered by, great religious movements; they condemn revivals, as we now commonly term them. Only when a spiritual movement has established itself, when its beneficial character is too plain to be doubted, does it receive from the world at first a grudging, and then a respectful recognition.

At the present time, alike in East Anglia and in Northeast Scotland, there have been notable signs of a religious awakening among some sections of our people. In Southern India and in Central Africa an enthusiasm for Christianity has recently shown itself, so extensive that the missionary so-

¹ Delivered in Westminster Abbey and published also in *The Church Family Newspaper*.

cieties have found their resources insufficient for the suddenly-developed need. Our newspapers, for the most part, either ignore these movements or are sceptical that any permanent good will result from them. What ought our attitude to be? This afternoon we may well meditate upon this important subject, and remind ourselves of the nature and consequence of some similar movements in the past.

WILLIAM BOOTH'S EFFORTS

Some of us are old enough to remember the days when William Booth began his effective public ministry, and the Salvation Army spread throughout England. His methods were decried for their vulgarity. Street-corner preaching was derided. The so-called Skeleton Army was organized to break up his meetings. At times the police took action for obstruction against his officers; but, when in the north of England a magistrate stepped from the Bench to take a place in the dock by the side of a woman in a Salvation Army bonnet, the end of official interference was rapid. And William Booth lived to receive an honorary degree from the University of Oxford.

Very similar was the experience of Wesley and Whitefield, the pioneers and leaders of the great Evangelical Movement of the eighteenth century. Whitefield was a man of the people, with a superb gift for popular open-air preaching. Wesley was

an Oxford scholar of good family, at first reluctant to do anything so unusual as preaching in field or market-place. When he took the plunge, he found his life's work. Both men at first had to endure persecution, kicks, blows and missiles from the half-savage, wholly pagan rabble of the time. Men of position, even some of the clergy, encouraged or condoned such violence. Enthusiasm was a word of contempt. In 1768 six undergraduates were brought by their tutor before the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford on the charge that they were "enthusiasts who talked of regeneration, inspiration, and drawing nigh to God." On this charge they were expelled from the University. In the end, of course, spiritual enthusiasm justified both itself and the men whose lives it enriched. Wesley, after an incredibly active open-air ministry of fifty-two years, died in 1791, respected and honoured by good men throughout England. From the fire which he kindled came the greater part of the spiritual energy which regenerated both our Church and Non-conformity at the close of the eighteenth century. Probably few in his own lifetime thought of him as a political force; he was a prophet called by God to preach the Gospel with power and great glory. But modern historians, asking why this country was preserved from the horrors of the French Revolution, find in Wesley and his fellow Evangelists the reason. He enlisted in the service of Christ many who would

otherwise have been wild and impetuous reformers. Through him the spirit of peace and righteousness became strong in the land. Though our people suffered and endured much that was evil, Wesley had taught them that, by brotherhood and not by violence, men build the Kingdom of God.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The great Evangelical Movement of the eighteenth century is especially interesting as showing how rapidly and how far spiritual earnestness can travel. A religious awakening in South Germany led to the foreign missionary work of the Moravian brotherhood. Both here and in America its influence was felt, and in particular, by John Wesley. Wesley's early mission to Georgia failed; but Methodist success in Western England led to similar success in America. Later the stream of inspiration flowed back to England, and so fired William Carey and his friends of the Northampton Association that they started to preach the Gospel in India. In all this wonderful development there was a unity. We seem to see many movements in different lands. In reality the same Spirit was dominant in all; the same purpose and the same power, in Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Moravian, showed that all were fundamentally one in Christ Jesus.

In the light of such facts of history, we may well inquire why it is that religious revivals, when

they begin, should be so disliked alike by the worldly and the placidly religious. Why are they commonly viewed with prejudice, and their leaders often reviled? The early Christians, products of the greatest religious movement in the history of mankind, were accused of atheism and foul vices. For a century after St. Paul's death the educated of the ancient world almost invariably excluded from their writings any mention of the new and despicable superstition. Now, several reasons combine to create this attitude. There is distrust of the unknown. An outburst of religious zeal is inexplicable; and the presence of the Spirit of God is disturbing. Those in whom it comes to dwell see the world in new light, and comfortable hypocrisies wither under its glare. Then, too, all strong emotion is unpleasant to an onlooker; the behaviour of those to whom the revelation of God comes suddenly is that of men at a crisis, tears and intimate speech, penitence and joy. When tears made white marks down the cheeks of the colliers to whom Whitefield preached, respectable people were repelled. It was to them as if some obscure contagion had broken out. We may admit that such a view is not wholly wrong. As the Dean of St. Paul's has well said, "Religion is caught, not taught." In a spiritually healthy society we may catch it unawares, and grow, as it were naturally, to feel the presence of God, His Spirit guiding and aiding us. But, when the Spirit

comes among masses of men to whom religion has meant nothing, it may come with explosive force. Organized society fears explosions; they may be dangerous. Further, as we examine the causes of dislike of religious enthusiasm, let us admit that sometimes the fire burns out quickly; no lasting good results. The parable of the sower shows that Jesus was well aware of this disappointing end. Sometimes reaction makes the whole process not merely barren but harmful. To the house swept and garnished come seven devils worse than the first. Then, too, there are always persons ready to exploit a religious movement for base personal advantage. The greater religious leaders have been strong to protect their organizations from self-seeking adventurers. St. Paul, Wesley, Booth were all, for this reason, somewhat autocratic in their rule.

JUSTIFIED BY THEIR FRUITS

Yet, when all that is to their discredit is admitted, the great uprushes of the Spirit are justified by their fruits. They bring into the presence of God men who have never been there before. In the words of the Psalmist they create clean hearts; they renew a right spirit in human society. Critics who say that the theology of revivalism is crude are in danger of forgetting that an impeccable theology may be joined to singularly barren forms of organized religion. Churches grow

sterile unless quickened by just those spiritual movements which at first their members are apt to regard with disfavour. Often a movement, when organized into a Church, loses its power as the original impetus becomes a dying tradition. Nothing is more pathetic than the sight of a great religious movement become threadbare. Phrases and formulæ survive. Once they meant much. They were the battle-cries of spiritual welfare, the best expression men could give of the enthusiasm which transformed their lives. They were in some ways like paper money, of merely symbolic value; but behind them was the gold of spiritual reality, and so they satisfied human needs. Yet there comes a time in the history of every religious movement when the spirit which made it passes away. So it was with Pharisaism, the finest religious development of post-exilic Judaism. The salt lost its savour. Insensibly a passion for truth and righteousness became a tradition of casuistry and formalism. Needless to say, men are not redeemed by defensive verbal ingenuity or by self-regarding schemes of conduct. Yet he who would break tradition to renew the power of the Spirit of God seems to upholders of tradition a dangerous man. The faith is imperilled, its unity destroyed, thought the Pharisees, by a Teacher who would play fast and loose with laws ascribed to Moses. None but a man careless of economic security or national honour would denounce the rich and preach

“Resist no evil.” So the professional exponents of the laws of Moses ranged themselves against Him Who came, not to destroy, but to fulfill that law. The righteous and the worldly alike encouraged the mob to cry “Crucify Him.”

TO SERVE GOD IS TO FOLLOW JESUS

Religious people need always to be on their guard lest they range themselves with tradition against the Spirit of God. Let us allow that not every enthusiasm which stirs men is divine. But when religious enthusiasm leads to a passion for justice and righteousness, for truth and love, there is in it the true Spirit of Christ. In the Hebrew prophets His Spirit appeared. His was the message, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,” whereby the prophets set personal purity and social service above formal worship. In modern times the presence of the Spirit of Christ is similarly the test of true religious understanding. It is not an accident that those religious revivals which have been supremely fruitful have led me to Jesus, to find in Him the Lord and Saviour of mankind. For to serve God, to be true to the best that we can picture, is to follow Jesus, to make Him an example and pattern. And we cannot be loyal to Jesus without painful effort, inward conflict, renunciation, suffering. So men who are converted always make the Cross central in their outlook on human life. On the Cross Jesus showed that the

Son of God had to give up all to do His Father's will. There His love for mankind was seen in service sealed by death. There in loneliness and misery He passed to the New Life which, through Him, all may win. The man who would save his life shall lose it, but he who will give it up that the Kingdom of Christ may come shall keep it unto life eternal. Such is the final answer to the question, "Is religion worth while?" "How shall we balance gain and loss?" The same answer is put in other words in Isaac Watts' familiar lines:

"When I survey the wondrous Cross,
Where the young Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride."

WHAT WE NEED

If these lines do not ring true in our ears, if their beauty seems faded or their sentiment exaggerated, we have forgotten the rock on which Christ's Church is built. Many there are amongst us to whom the Gospel and the Cross mean little. The war has quenched the Spirit. It has done much to barbarize thought. New cults are flourishing which are travesties of religion; for they neither emphasize that the God Who made us for Himself is righteousness and love, nor do they point to One Who, by the perfection of His service, explained the puzzle of human life. We need a

wave of spiritual understanding to flow over the land, a revival in which men shall see through Jesus why they exist and what they ought to do and be. Here we are, in a Universe of incomprehensible vastness, shut in by the unknown on every side, mere dust and water, for an absurdly brief time alive. Dreams and fears and hopes, appetites and aspirations—and then quickly the end. What is man? What is the meaning of his life, its value in the whole scheme of things? There is, I am convinced, no explanation of it all, save in that revelation of God which came through the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is why, when, in a revival of religion, men are converted and find Christ, their wanderings cease and their true pilgrimage begins. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

II

THE FAITH THAT COUNTS

By

DAVID JAMES BURRELL, D. D., LL. D.,
*Pastor of Marble Collegiate (Reformed) Church,
New York*

David James Burrell was born at Mount Pleasant, Pa., August 1, 1844. He received his education at Yale University and at Union Theological Seminary, New York City; ordained Presbyterian ministry, 1872; missionary, Chicago, 1872-1876; Pastor Second Church, Dubuque, Ia., 1876-1887; Westminster Church, Minneapolis, 1887-1891. Since 1891, Dr. Burrell has been pastor of the historic Marble Collegiate Reformed Church on Fifth Avenue, New York City. Dr. Burrell represents both a great preacher and an uncommon pastor. For more than thirty years, his pulpit has been his throne, while his influence has spread all over America. Dr. Burrell is the author of more than forty different books, together with many tracts and sermons.

Among Dr. Burrell's many volumes may be mentioned: *The Laughter of God*, *Why I Believe the Bible*, *The Sermon: Its Construction and Delivery*, *The Religion of the Future*, *The Spirit of the Age*, *The Lure of the City*, *Christ and Progress*, *The Wondrous Cross* and *The Evolution of a Christian*.

II

THE FAITH THAT COUNTS

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

—JOHN 9:35.

A BLIND man sits by the Temple gate with his hand stretched out for alms. A group of men approach, who seem to be disputing about the doctrine of Original Sin. The blind beggar furnished an illustration in point. "Master, who did sin," they ask, "this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"—"Neither," He answers, "so far as we are concerned just now. The question is, What shall be done about it? As for me, I must work the works of Him that hath sent me, while it is day." Thereupon He anoints the beggar's eyes with clay and bids him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." The man gropes his way to the pool near by, while Jesus and His disciples pass on to Solomon's Porch, His usual preaching station, where the people gather about Him.

The beggar, having recovered his sight, returns to his customary place by the gate, where he is naturally the observed of all observers. Some are asking, "Is not this the blind beggar?" Others

say, "It is impossible; look at his eyes!" The man settles the question by affirming, "I am he." They ask how his eyes were opened.—"A man that is called Jesus anointed mine eyes with clay and bade me wash in Siloam; and I went and washed and received my sight."—"Where is this man?"—"I know not; I wish I did, that I might thank him."

They lead the beggar to the Pharisees in the Temple, who proceed to catechize him: "Art thou the blind man who sat by the gate?"—"I am."—"How didst thou receive thy sight?"—"A man that is called Jesus bade me wash in Siloam, which I did and came seeing."—"When did this occur?"—"This morning."—At this there is a lifting of their eyebrows; "Aha, this Jesus is a sinner. He has been breaking the Sabbath! What sayest thou of him?"—"I say he must be a prophet;" that is, a holy man.

At this point the parents of the man are called and questioned: "Is this your son who was born blind?"—"It is."—"How then doth he see?"—"We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but by what means he doth now see we know not, or who hath opened his eyes we know not. He is of age; ask him." They evidently scent danger and prudently avoid it.

The fact of the beggar's cure being now beyond question, the inquisitors turn again to him, saying, "Give God the praise. As for this Jesus, he is a

sinner; thou shouldst have no dealings with him." His answer is, "Whether he be a sinner I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!" They continue, "Tell us, what did he do? How opened he thine eyes?"—"I have told you and ye believed not; why pursue the matter? Would ye be his disciples?" This is too much; they lose their temper: "Thou art his disciple! As for us we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is."—"Why here is a marvelous thing," he exclaims, "that ye know not whence he is and yet he hath opened mine eyes! How could he, if God were not with him?" Sound reasoning, but how tactless and presumptuous on a beggar's lips! "Thou wast altogether born in sin," they reply, "and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out.

In a lonely place, somewhere outside the walls, he wanders with the anathema upon him. Outcast and excommunicate, who will venture now to lend a hand or put a cup of water to his thirsty lips?

Jesus finds him. O blessed seeker of the lost! He asks, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" A strange question, when one stops to think of it; so apparently abrupt and inconsequential. Why not, rather, a word of sympathy and encouragement? No; the question cannot wait. It never can wait. It presses hard upon every one of us

for an immediate answer, because the issues of life are involved in it.—“Who is he, Lord,” asks the beggar, “that I might believe on him?”—“Thou hast both seen him and he it is that talketh with thee.”—“Lord, I believe!” And he worships Him.

So ends the drama. A seeking sinner always finds a seeking Saviour; and the turning-point of every life is reached just here. “Dost thou believe in the Son of God?” It is distinctly a personal question; “Dost thou?” Every man must answer it for himself. It cannot be farmed out; it cannot be postponed until a more convenient season; it cannot be evaded, since not to believe is to believe not.

This being so, it is vitally important that we should understand precisely what is meant by “believing in the Son of God.”

THE CHRIST OF LONG AGO

To begin with, it does not mean simply to believe in the historic Christ; that is, in a personage who lived, suffered and died nineteen hundred years ago. So far as that goes, everybody believes; just as everybody believes in Julius Cæsar and Napoleon; but nobody is morally or spiritually affected by it. Obviously this sort of faith is only a door ajar, which may or may not be pushed open into something further on.

THE BEST OF MEN

And again it means more than to believe that Jesus was a superman. Everybody believes that too. Pilate even, who sentenced Him to death, confessed, "I find no fault in him at all," and the centurion who had charge of His crucifixion said, "Verily this was a righteous man." Some of the most glowing tributes ever paid to Jesus as a mere man have been uttered by men like Goethe and Channing, David Strauss and Ernest Renan and John Stuart Mill, who have utterly refused to accept His superior claims. But Jesus declined to be honoured that way. To the young ruler who came running to Him with the appeal, "Good master, what must I do that I might inherit eternal life?" His answer was, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God;" which could only mean that the young man must either go further or go back; must acknowledge that Jesus was what He insistently claimed to be or else pronounce Him a deceiver and a charlatan. There is no middle ground to stand on.

THE GREAT TEACHER

For another thing, it is not enough to believe in Him as a super-eminent teacher, the peer of Plato and Seneca and Marcus Aurelius; or even as a greater than them all. The Roman guard that was sent to arrest Him as He was teaching in Solomon's

Porch came back empty-handed and with nothing better to say for themselves than, "Never man spake like this man!" The teaching of Jesus has overawed His enemies time without number. Listen to Theodore Parker: "He pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven and true as God!" But what of it? Even orthodoxy has no saving power, unless it grips more than one's intellectuals. A man may know his Bible "by heart" without getting it into his heart or having his life affected by it.

THE THAUMATURGE

Still further, the faith that really counts must do more than accept Jesus as a wonder-worker. His miracles were unquestioned by those who hated and crucified Him; but again what of it? The Bible affirms that Moses wrought miracles too; a fact that everybody accepts (barring the anti-biblical critics, of course, who are willing to believe anything so long as the Bible does not say it), but that fact has only the most remote connection with the business at hand. The important question is whether Jesus is able to save. Nicodemus the rabbi was frank to confess that Jesus was "a teacher come from God," because, as he said, "no man could do the miracles which thou doest except God were with him;" but when Jesus told him that he "must be born again," he staggered with unbelief, crying, "How can these things be?"

A SON OF GOD

Well then, suppose a man believes in Jesus as a Son of God—will that answer? By no means. We are constantly reminded that “there are many sons of God.” The definite article “the” sets Jesus apart from all others as a singular Son of God. “Behold,” says John, “what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God;” but our sonship is by adoption while that of Jesus is by a divine begetting, or as the old time theologians used to say, “by an eternal generation.” If the Scriptural account of the virgin birth be rejected, it follows that He, like shorn Samson, is “weak as other men;” in which case He is no longer the mighty to save. This involves a denial of the claim for which He suffered death, namely, that He was “equal with God.”

THE SON OF GOD

It thus appears, by a process of elimination, that we are to believe in Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. Will that, then, make our calling and election sure? Not yet. One may consent that the Child in the manger was “God manifest in flesh;” that the sufferer on the cross was “tasting death for every man;” that the miracle in Joseph’s garden was a real triumph over death; and that the ascension of Jesus was a veritable return to

“the glory which he had with the Father before the world was,” without being vitally affected by it. An intellectual apprehension of truth, based on incontrovertible evidence, not infrequently leaves the soul as unmoved as are the depths of the sea by the winds that blow over and ruffle it.

MY SAVIOUR

The only faith that makes for salvation is the faith that appropriates. The word “thou” in our Lord’s question takes in the whole man: mind, conscience, heart and will. This makes the objective Christ a subjective reality. One must so believe on Him as to be able to say, “My Lord, my life, my sacrifice, my Saviour and my all.” Or to use Luther’s words, “It is the first personal pronoun possessive that brings us into vital harmony with God.” This is what Jesus meant when He said, “Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you;” that is, He must be so received as to enter into our whole being, precisely as our food is assimilated and transmuted into nerve and sinew and thought and character and usefulness. The result is such a blending of personalities that the believer is able to say with Paul, “It is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me; for the life which I now live is by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

“Son of God, to Thee I cry:
By the holy mystery
Of Thy dwelling here on earth,
By Thy pure and holy birth,
Lord, Thy presence let me see,
Manifest Thyself to me!”

How may we know that we thus believe in Him? The test is worship; not lip-service but the consecration of time, energy and self itself to Christ. A man is adjudged a good citizen not by his ability to sing “My country 'tis of thee” but by his whole-hearted accord with everything that makes our Republic what it is. Repeating a Creed is a very different thing from believing it. Thomas was a disciple of Jesus long before he really apprehended Him. It was not until with open eyes beholding he saw the nail-prints in the hands of the living Christ, that he came to believe in Jesus as what He claimed to be and therefore able to save; then he worshipped with the cry, “My Lord and my God!” The same was true of Luther who was years old in monkhood when, under the Crucifix of the Monastery at Erfurt, he cried, with tears in his throat, “Für mich, für mich; He died for me!” This, and nothing short of it, is to believe in Him.

Is any one asking, “Where is He, that I might thus believe on Him?” The answer is, “Thou hast already seen him and he it is that talketh with thee.” I see Him now coming down the aisle

yonder, mounting the pulpit steps and pausing here beside me. Let me be silent while He speaks, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God; thou for whom I have waited until my locks are wet with the drops of night? Thou hast long believed about me; wilt thou go further and believe on me? Then shall we sup together and thy voice tremble with the joy of a new confession, 'I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until the day when I shall meet him in glory and see him as he is.' "

III

FAITH'S CORONATION

By

SAMUEL PARKES CADMAN, D. D., S. T. D.,

*Pastor Central Congregational Church,
Brooklyn, N. Y.*

Samuel Parkes Cadman was born in Shropshire, England, December 18, 1864, and was graduated from Richmond College, London University in 1889. Coming to America in 1890, he was appointed Pastor of the Metropolitan Temple, New York City, in 1895. From this pastorate he was called to Central Congregational Church, Brooklyn. Dr. Cadman is the humanist among American Congregational divines. He possesses in a rare manner both evangelical fervour and profound learning. Both in the pulpit and on the platform, Dr. Cadman stands in a class of his own, and no one in this generation has accomplished more in welding bonds of friendship between America and Great Britain. Dr. Cadman has written several very important books; chief among his published works are: *The Three Religious Leaders of Oxford*, *Ambassadors of God* and *Lectures on Church and State* (in the press).

III

FAITH'S CORONATION

"Now the end of the commandment (charge) is love out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."—I TIMOTHY I: 5.

I

THE charge which St. Paul commissioned St. Timothy to lay upon the Church at Ephesus was meant to veto those useless speculations and controversies which injured the fraternity of the sacred household. Fine spun allegories, fabulous recitals of the generation and gradation of the angelic hosts, the arithmetic of mysterious æons, and lurid predictions of apocalypses, then, as now, had a strange fascination for a certain type of believers. They were too preoccupied with vain debates upon inexplicable themes to give heed to the real ends of religion. Evangelical discretion was at the mercy of zealots, who identified divine truth with their distorted notions, making them the test of spiritual understanding. In order that the growing evil should be eliminated the Apostle defined the outstanding purpose of the New Testament gospel as a salvatory education. His language is axiomatic, precise, compressed; erroneous

or perverse constructions find no opening in his closely woven arguments. Both matter and words express the wisdom of a profound religious experience. They rank as a classic utterance embodying the aims of Christian being and its obligations. According to them the heart's pure love begins and continues in faith unfeigned. The power that surpasses any other; the one power in this world and the world beyond which is superior to the creeds, or better still, behind them, is the love herein named. The love that gives and does not ask, and being denied, still loves with joy and gladness. In their deepest selves, men and women know that this love is the grand reality of life, infinitely more substantial and authoritative than all objects of sensory perception.

Yet neither this love nor any other ordination of Heaven can possess our souls without the royal faculty of faith. Believers can be and do nothing worthy of their calling apart from the vitalizing energy of faith as the gift of God. Where it is complete it hallows every profession of allegiance to our Lord and Redeemer; where it is defective, the development of the hidden man of the heart is arrested. Rectitude of conscience and of conduct is secured by faith unfeigned. The motives and thoughts which lie far and remote in human nature are regulated by it. They, too, own the sway of a divine and unfaltering faith. Affectation, pretense, caprice, deference to conventionality, and

even superstition or hypocrisy cannot defile the heritage of an undivided faith fixed upon its giver. But once this faith languishes, the weaknesses which simulate it speedily appear, evoking religious disaster.

Such a disaster fell upon ancient Israel and wrecked her usefulness to mankind. The prophet was displaced by the pharisee, and the interpreter by the scribe. These ardent advocates of Judaism suffered, not from secular but from religious skepticism; from disproportionate emphasis and confusion of sign with substance. Their outward pieties were ostentatious and austere. They loved to offer their endless prayers before the public eye. But these devotions were symptomatic of spiritual degeneracy. Excessive ceremonialisms, fastings for which sour faces were the bulletins; almsgiving to the tune of the trumpet's blare, and slavish adherence to outworn traditions were the trappings of Judaism's death. Shallow egotism and self-complacent arrogance marked its predominant tribe of religionists. Nor is the tribe extinct to-day. It still troubles God's Commonwealth, parading the insignia which denote the bigot and the formalist who thank Heaven they are not as other men are; who would willingly surrender the spirit of the Evangel to its letter, and the essences of Christian doctrine to their rituals. The pagan world of the period was also congenial to artificiality in religion. Its numerous cults were diversified

as to tenets, but alike in their utter failure to apprehend religious realities. Long after life had gone out of them, and their sterility was notorious, they retained popular approval and enjoyed national patronage. Temples arose in profusion to celebrate legends which cultured Greeks and Romans mocked, and the proletariat despised. The moments of solemn insight, the passports to justice and compassion, which one finds in Plato and Marcus Aurelius, were now foreign to the pagan habit. Its soul, like that of Israel, was smothered beneath the pressure of a stately externalism. What happened then, and did not spare the chosen race, may happen now, and is well within the realm of possibility. Every generation must itself transmit the creative forces which beget real religion, intellectually conceived, morally exemplified, culminating in that love which is the height of good and hate of ill; the triumph of truth, and falsehood's overthrow.

II

The theological training of seminaries and colleges does not impart faith unfeigned. Be that training liberal or conservative, it is necessarily secondary, and has been overestimated in the Church. The gifts of God are not commandeered by instructors, however sincere or erudite. I foresee in saying this, the complaints of critical minds which can scarcely conceive the oceanic power be-

hind the faith St. Paul honours. Nevertheless, it is always originaive of the best in particular doctrinal systems. These have their day and cease to be. But the faith which is a part of God's predetermination for mankind produces its own intellectual fabric and makes the pace for man's enlarging knowledge of the world. It will not be found flat, stale, unprofitable. No branch of learned inquiry will successfully challenge its supremacy. It is purposive as well as creative, and finds its vindication in the character it shapes and the civilization it promotes. We shall not be vexed with doubts about the hazards of the Church and her embassies when such faith has control in us. If theological research puts religious realities from old or new standpoints, and with more accurate technique, its results should be gratefully accepted. But it is sheer impertinence and, in some instances, revolt against New Testament Christianity, to declare that its fate is involved in the welter of human opinions about it.

Broadly speaking, one has good reason to question those forms of Christianity which have been too much influenced by contemporary opinion, be it either reactionary or progressive. While factionists contend for the merits of their respective systems, their regenerative capacity is apt to diminish. It may be urged that the collective judgments of earnest men are of considerable value. Do they not suppress notorious wrongs, refine so-

cial customs and upraise the public mind? Certainly these achievements are listed to their credit. But faith unfeigned is not brought into being by religious views and counter views. It rests on no human foundations: least of all on those fissured by controversy. It is neither mimetic nor differential. It owns and is not owned by the historic personalities of Christian annals. Its manifestations in the building of the Church and of decently behaved States have not always followed prescribed paths. Coming, as it does, directly from God through Christ, "faith unfeigned" has frequently confounded the wisdom of the wise and rebuked the passions of the simple.

Its light has shone forth in unsuspected spots and through apparently feeble agents. Yet men's perceptions were enlightened, their affections sweetened, their ethics and their conduct purified. Skin-deep inoculations which had been substitutes for the transforming power of this faith were swept away because of their inadequacy to meet the demands of human life. The beliefs assumed for the sake of intellectual consistency were promptly discarded, for intellectualism often changes its fashion, and indeed is rapidly changing it now. But the God-given trust fastened on eternal realities does not have to change. It is independent of the clearest and most cogent brains; and as available for all creatures as air or light. The believer who is wise enough to rest his soul

on God as revealed in His Son reflects upon the immensity of the past, the littleness of the present, the boundlessness of the future; upon the Deity before whom time and space are as nothing. He centers his hope on the Everlasting; the Ever Present One, from whom all life, strength and redemption proceed. His self-manifestation in our Blessed Lord sustains every Christian against the dominancy of temporal things. He does not think of death as the worst possible, as do the unbelieving. Regions beyond the grave are no terrible void for him. The heathen rage, the people in their self-adulation imagine a vain thing. But faith unfeigned raises its subjects above the sensible universe, enables them to break its thrall, and to go forward confidently to the destiny awaiting them. Only those who put the seen before the unseen, gain before righteousness, baseness before nobleness and pleasure before their Maker, will deny this position. The Ruler of life and death, of judgment and eternity, is the disposer of faith unfeigned. Who is on His side? Who shall stand when He appears?

III

Some recent crusades in Protestantism assert that Christian faith is an epidemic which spreads from soul to soul by means of associations surcharged with surface excitement. Fellowship stimulates religious beliefs and interests. But it

is the individual alone in his or her own personal contact with the Spirit of the Living God who receives vitalizing faith. The operations of the Spirit should not be discounted by the press of the multitude. He prefers to deal with the man, not the mass. Devices for capturing the one through the many are not sure of His approval. They may be legitimate or again, as not a few are, illegitimate. Meanwhile the modest God delights to dwell in the single heart and there He witnesses of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come. He is the great companion of conscience, memory, and will, and none but He has the pass-key to the throne room of the soul. He unveils the bliss, the burden, the rapture, and the affliction of that mind which was in Christ Jesus. Through Him the attributes of human nature are harmonized with the Divine will. If you ask for a token of His indwelling, its chief evidence is in your penitential attitude. Contrition is His hall-mark, and its painfulness is the birth pang of your regenerate being. Those who deem iniquity a trifle, retribution an open question, goodness a matter of environment or of education, and evil habits no more than a reaction from irrestrainable tendencies, may escape the Spirit's searching for a time, but they never escape beggary of soul and moral destitution.

Their ideas of life are altogether too meager for its necessities. Nothing of lasting significance

pivots on them or on what they think. Their capacity for ever enlarging blessedness is nullified by their alliance with the perishable elements of existence. On the other hand, the faith which fosters in us the sense of immortality and constrains us to shape our course accordingly is inevitably triumphant. It is not a speculation, nor a theory, nor a concession to what is seemly. These, if they exist at all, are its accidents. At the core it is the throb in men of the heart of honour and of fire at the center of all things: the divine dynamic which drives life toward its ascertainable and best ends.

Sophistications do not disfigure the mind which seeks, not only knowledge, but wisdom in religious competency and sacrificial duty. Fidelity to God is expressed in the purpose to discover what is truly religious as finally reasonable and to believe that those who deny either are in peril of being neither. In this concord, the transient and segmental experiences of a mutilated trust are unknown. Faith is normal, and habitual because the acts comprised in the sum total of a human life are responsive to one Presence and its rule. Midway between faith's germinal activities and the pure love which crowns them is a good conscience, standardized by the spirit and teaching of the Master. Its most exacting requirements receive their sanction from faith as the receptive faculty of God's illumination. This conscience is not content to be righteous;

commendable as that is; it is also the conscience of pity which modifies the tenets of justice with the precepts of benevolence. It welcomes the highest ethic of sacrificial service and holds to holiness as more desirable even than righteousness. The fruits of holiness cannot but be excellent for the faith unfeigned which makes the Christian conscience alert, discriminative, ready to respond to every impulse, not only of law but of grace. It spurns the compromises which plague moral vigour. As the sun-bathed branch connects the root in the soil beneath with the luscious clusters of the vine above, so conscience connects the tenderest and purest love with the natural affections from which it springs. This truth explains in a measure St. Paul's distinction between the "righteous" and the "good" man.

IV

Lastly, God's purpose is to educe in His children the spiritual abandonment of Christian love. Its chief limitation is imposed upon it by playing off the will against the affections and the intellect against the conscience. St. Paul forewarns us against the chaos in which one faculty hoodwinks another. Their harmony by faith's free, full exercise is the distinctive note of the text. When this is gained, the clouds disperse, the shadows

flee; the whole man rejoices in a divine life and law to which every member of his being yields cheerful obedience.

Mere emotionalism is barred; intellectual effort subserves spiritual liberty, and charity, the life-blood of creeds and churches, becomes the perfectness of faith. It is needless to remark that much called love is veneered selfishness, covert grossness, masked anarchy. But this love, of which St. Paul's soul was full to overflowing, comes from the nature which God has revealed in Christ. Currents of feeling that assume its title often carry in solution the taint of moral squalor, the subtle poison of spiritual death. It has to be defined by one's experience and demonstrated by one's deeds. These together aim to confer the best upon the worst by bringing all men and women whom that love can reach within its radius. Because it holds the sinner very dear to God it is not likely to be a smiling affability. Politic affinities and honeyed phrases which nourish desire at the cost of character do not become its ministry to mankind. The parading of what is convenient or practicable or materially profitable as Christian love will not mislead those who have bowed at the Cross and there tasted the grace of God. Unfeigned faith is its parent, conscience is its preceptor, a purified heart the center from which it issues to bless its surroundings. None of them is dispensable, and all their springs

are in God. We are here dealing with the discerners of hearts who is intent upon our fitness for His fellowship. We speak of the love He had for us when He sent the Saviour of the world to Bethlehem and to Calvary. "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath toward us that we should be called the sons of God," exclaimed St. John. It should be as altruistic in us as it was in the Master. Then the souls of the believers and the soul of the Church Universal alike shall be as a sea of glass mingled with fire, embracing peace and power, replete of force without waste, and of tranquillity with fervour.

The scenes of earthly circumstance which belonged to the Roman Empire when St. Paul wrote these words have vanished forever. The chariots of gold and silver, the pomp, the warriors, the pageants, the millions of followers drunk with the cup of abominations, have become as though they had not been. Wantonness, insolence and pride have passed with that corrupted world. The avenging gates have closed on them. The Temple at Jerusalem has shared their doom. But the truth of this text continues as an everlasting testimony to the Gospel which ministers to our penitence and our hope. Let us cling to its simplicity as the life of God in the souls of men, made known by faith unfeigned, by intellectual honesty, by the warrant of a conscience void of offense toward God and man, by the love which is faith's coronation.

IV

PROCRASTINATION

By

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IV

PROCRASTINATION

"When I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me."—ACTS 24:25.

WE are to think this morning about the homely and familiar matter of procrastination. Instead of letting our thoughts dwell upon that abstract noun let us from the beginning have in our mind's eye a concrete picture from the life of Paul. Paul had been mobbed and nearly killed by his fellow countrymen in Jerusalem; and, saved only by the intervention of the Roman soldiery, he soon found himself in prison in Cæsarea, where he had been taken to escape lynching. There Felix, the governor, was alike his jailer and his judge. One night when the governor's wife, Drusilla, wished to hear and see this tempestuous and troublesome Jew, Felix had Paul brought before him, and allowed him freedom to speak. One might have thought that Paul's spirit would have been tamed by his perilous experience; but Paul was always like a fire that is not blown out but fanned to a fiercer heat when the hard winds blow. Let the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Acts tell us the simple narrative: "After certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and

heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me."

Felix is one of the most unlovely characters in Scripture, and all that we know of him outside of Scripture simply deepens our distaste for him. Yet it is apparent from this experience of his with Paul that like all the rest of us he was a strange combination of good and bad, that deep in his heart he had chords that the fine, strong fingers of a personality like Paul persuasively could play upon. Bad as he was, let us remember that there was one time when he heard the Gospel of Jesus and was stirred by it, when he heard great words about righteousness and self-control, and felt their appeal, when he looked upon his life and the end to which it was tending, and shrank back from it. He was not all bad.

This morning we are going to think of the way he dealt with this significant hour with the apostle. You will notice that he was not abusive and discourteous; he was not blasphemous and sceptical. He merely procrastinated. He simply postponed decision; he politely waved the matter aside, and said, "When I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." And so he lost the supreme opportunity of his life.

Is it not so that we are continually making failures of our lives? Here in this church, where through another winter we have so repeatedly presented appeals for the Master, for the type and quality of spirit which He represents, for the concrete opportunities of service which His cause offers, one does not suspect that there has been much brusque and deliberate rejection, much scornful and contemptuous scepticism; but one does suspect that among all the people who have gathered here there must have been a great deal of procrastination. It is so popular a method of avoidance. It can be indulged in so easily and without offense. How many times in this church do you suppose these words have in effect been spoken in the hearts of men: "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me"?

We are all perfectly familiar with this habit of procrastination in practical details. We do not decide not to answer a letter from a friend. We simply postpone answering it. We take it up, and dally with it, and lay it aside for a more convenient time. We do not decide not to make a call that ought to be made. We merely postpone making it. We let the days and weeks pass; and ever, as we postpone it, it becomes easier to postpone it still, until at last the call is never made at all. We never decide not to hear the best music and read the best books. We

merely defer doing so. We comfort our consciences by saying, "Sometime we will see this or hear that." And we never decide not to pay serious attention to the religious education of our children. We simply put it off; we refer it to this nebulous, convenient to-morrow when all letters are going to be answered, all calls made, all privileges enjoyed, and all duties done. With this popular habit of procrastination we are perfectly familiar.

But surely it is not so small and trivial a matter as too frequently we are tempted to suppose. Leonardo da Vinci's picture of the Last Supper was spoiled by a single broken tile through which the rain poured down across the face of Christ. So great a picture to be spoiled by so small a thing! Yet after many years of watching folk from the vantage-point of the ministry I am sure that many lives are spoiled in that way, and that the broken tile is the habit of procrastination.

Pick up the words of Felix this morning, one of the classic utterances of a confirmed procrastinator, and look into them until, as in a mirror, they reveal us to ourselves.

First of all, how full of hope they are! Felix is counting on the future. "A more convenient season," he says politely to Paul as he bids him good-night; and at once we are aware that procrastination is the perversion of something good. It is the abuse of hope. It is the misuse of to-morrow. Now, to-morrow is one of God's best

gifts to men. The animals do not possess it. They have only to-day,—their yesterdays dim and vague, their to-morrows prepared for by instinct, but not by expectation,—but man has yesterday and to-day and to-morrow. How utterly bereft we all should be without that backreach of memory and that outreach of hope! If to-day the clouds overspread our sky, to-morrow the sun may shine again. If to-day sickness has invaded our homes, to-morrow health may come back once more. If to-day our business is vexatious and troublesome, to-morrow may see the turning of the tide that will bring back the better times. If to-day our temptations seem insupportable, to-morrow we may find spiritual power to overcome. And if to-day we are cast down by the weariness and tragedy of this war-rent mankind, we turn to a prophet to encourage us about to-morrow: "My own hope is, a sun will pierce the thickest cloud earth ever stretched." We should all be lost without to-morrow, for in hope we are saved.

But here, as always, the perversion of the best is the worst, and the perversion of to-morrow is procrastination. For we keep putting off until to-morrow the enjoyment of privileges and the use of opportunities that we ought to rejoice in to-day. I suspect that we ministers are sometimes partly responsible for this very attitude against which I speak. For continually we plead for ideals we are sometime to realize but have not yet attained; we

urge gains in personal and social life that are sometime to be achieved, but are not yet achieved. We fill in the picture of to-morrow with blessings to be enjoyed, ideals to be attained, until the upshot may be that we draw the thought of our people away from what they have to-day to what they may have to-morrow. To-day in our preaching becomes too often something to be overpassed and outgrown, but to-morrow is the home of fulfilled ideals. There is, however, a serious fallacy in this. We need continually to be reminded not simply of what we may have sometime, but of what we do have to-day.

It is a shame to see a man running across his to-days as a boy runs a race, with his eyes tightly fixed upon the far goal, thinking only of what lies ahead. But many men do so run their lives. "To-morrow," they cry, while all the time to-day presents to them privileges and blessings that they run past, not seeing.

"Felix, come out and enjoy the sunset," and Felix says, "To-morrow." But to-morrow the sunset will not be one whit more beautiful than it is to-day if we have eyes to see it.

"Felix, let us rejoice in friendship;" and Felix says, "To-morrow." But friends will not be one bit more beautiful to-morrow than they are to-day if we have eyes to see and hearts to understand.

"Felix, let us grow up with our children, and even here on earth gain a foretaste of heaven which

a true home affords." And Felix says, "To-morrow." But your children will not be one bit more fascinating in their youthful companionship to-morrow than they are to-day; and you may say "To-morrow" too long, until there are no children to grow up with in your home at all.

"Felix, let us enter into the sustaining fellowship of Christ, see life from His height, and live in His spirit;" and Felix says, "To-morrow." But Christ will not be one whit more gracious and redeeming to-morrow than He is to-day.

My friends, after all, to-day is all we actually do possess. Yesterday is gone, and to-morrow is not yet here; and procrastination is a deadly habit of blinding one's eyes to the opportunities and privileges we have in our hands and dreaming of something that sometime we may have. "*Carpe diem*," cried the old Latins, "Seize the day."

There are many of us who do not learn this significant lesson until we learn it in the hardest of all ways; we lose something that we have had in our possession a long time, too little appreciated; and then we wake up to wish above all things that we might have it back again. So an old man may look back upon the strength of youth that once he had. What a splendid time it was when he awoke each morning with power sufficient for his tasks, and went out to work with joy! Why did he not appreciate it more when he had it, and get more out of it? Often a man feels so about his friends

when they are gone. What tonic, refreshing spirits they were! Why did he not take more advantage of the fine boon of their fellowship when he had the chance? So, oftentimes, mothers feel about their children. They were so beautiful! Why did they leave them so much with others and live with them so little when they had a chance?

So, continually we are waking up to discover, only when we have lost them, that for years we have had life's choicest privileges within our grasp; for years we have been saying, "To-morrow" while each to-day was filled with unrealized possibilities. You will know where this applies to you. I am sure it does apply, for I am sure that every one of us has in his possession now relationships, blessings, opportunities, privileges, concerning which after each is gone, he will say, "Why did I not make more of it while I had it?" My friends, it will not do to go on postponing everything until to-morrow. If a man is going to live a fine, rich, radiant, and joyful Christian life, it were better to begin to-day.

Once more pick up these words of Felix and look at them. "A convenient season," he says to Paul, and at once we are aware that he doesn't think that he is deciding the question that Paul has raised. He thinks that he has postponed the decision, but he hasn't. For indecisive procrastination is one of the most conclusive methods of decision that mankind knows. Now, the reason for this is perfectly

simple. Life's processes do not call a halt simply because we have not made up our minds. If here in New York City or in the country round about you have this spring a garden-plot, you may suppose that you have three choices: either to have flowers, or to have weeds, or to be hesitant, uncertain, indecisive. But in fact you have only two choices. If you choose flowers, you may have them; but if you decide to be indecisive, nature will decide for you. You will have weeds. The processes of God's eternal universe do not stop to wait for us to make up our minds.

Now, life continually is facing us with these enforced decisions, where to endeavour to escape decision by procrastination is utter futility. For procrastination is irretrievable decision. Reach down into life at random, anywhere, and you will find illustrations in plenty. Shall we try to stop the starvation of the Chinese? is a question that has been facing us all these winter and spring months. Do you say you will wait for a more convenient season to make up your mind? You may as well say that you will not help them at all. For the processes of starvation do not cease until you decide. They still stalk their ghastly way through the Celestial Land, and take their toll of thousands and tens of thousands every day. To be indecisive is not to be indecisive. It is one of the most conclusive, fatal, irretrievable decisions you can make.

Or come in to a more homely episode. You see

a purse dropped in the street and you see the one who dropped it. You may suppose that you have three choices: either to be honest and return it, be dishonest and keep it, or be indecisive, uncertain. But you have only two choices. If you decide to be indecisive, the processes of life will not wait for you. The crowds will surge in between you and the purse's owner, and the opportunity of being honest which was yours for a moment will vanish; and, while you yourself will not decide, life will have decided for you and leave you standing there, dishonest.

Or, once more, let your imagination reach out to the most stupendous problem in the world to-day, the avoidance of war. Some people think we have three choices: either to make a united stand in favour of disarmament, to save the world from this intolerable burden of taxation for war that is breaking the back of our civilization; or to refuse to do that and to plunge deliberately into huge competition in armament in preparation for another way; or to be indecisive, to dally and defer, to procrastinate and put off. But as a matter of fact we have only two choices. The processes of life are not waiting—God pity us!—for us to make up our minds. We are like ships upon a sea where to drift means wreck as certainly as though with full deliberation we steered toward the rocks. A little more indecisiveness, uncertainty, procrastination, a little more folding of the hands and cry-

ing, "To-morrow," and it will be decided. We shall have another war.

In the same class with those illustrative instances lies that question on which Felix tried to postpone decision, the question of a righteous, self-controlled, and Christian life. For see this one element that runs through all these illustrative cases. To make flowers grow means positive decision; to help starving Chinese means a deliberate act; to be honest in a crisis means a thrust of the will; to move toward disarmament means a resolute act of the public conscience. All great things cause positive decision. You cannot float into them like thistle-down blowing in the wind. And being a Christian is a great thing. You cannot become a Christian in your sleep. You must make up your mind to it. And if any Felix endeavours to be indecisive, he is not really indecisive. His life processes still go on without Christ because he has not positively decided for Christ.

No earnest minister could speak on such a theme without thinking of the young men and women here who, it may be, have been in attendance on these morning services all this winter past, and now, as school or college closes, go to their homes, or, it may be, begin their business or professional careers. I speak to some of you as though I might never have the chance to speak to you again. No one would urge you to choose something that you do not understand or that you do not believe. But

if you have caught at all the emphases of this pulpit, you must see how little we care here about those sectarian peccadillos that have marred the church, and the theological peculiarities that have disfigured her serious thought; you must have seen how earnestly we have pressed our emphasis back to that central matter, the spirit of Jesus, His filial life with God, His brotherly life with men, His sacrificial passion for the coming of the kingdom of righteousness upon the earth, the faith that empowered Him, the hope that sustained Him, the character that was His crown and glory. You haven't three choices about that. You have two choices. You may glorify your life if you will by having Him for the Master of your soul. But if you try to be indecisive, you are not indecisive; you are missing Him; you are missing Him as thoroughly as though you said, "No" to Him. For you will go out to live a life not mastered by His positive faiths, not dedicated to His positive cause.

As one thinks of this refusal through procrastination, he sees how many men are living in just this attitude. For there are multitudes of people to whose hearts the highest impulses are not strange at all, who again and again have risen to the appeal of Jesus like waves that almost come to their crest, but not quite; they never quite break into the white foam of a finished billow; but they rise and sink, rise and sink, forever moving, but moving no-

where, forever promising, but never consummated. How futile is a life like that in any realm! In literature Coleridge was the consummate example of procrastination. He projected more poems, more essays, more lectures, than any other man that ever lived; but he finished almost nothing—a few things like “The Ancient Mariner,” but not much else. He planned everything, but he postponed work on anything. You pick up a page, and read,

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.”

You say, “This is fascinating.” But the trouble is, that is about all there is of it. He never finished it. It was a passing impulse. He never made up his mind to write it through. He was an animated prospectus, full of deferred plans.

But there are many of us who have no business to laugh at him. In a far more deep and important matter than writing poems, we are living that kind of life. Again and again we have felt the appeal of Christ. Again and again we have felt the lure of an open, decisive, consistent Christian life in a generation when open, decisive, and consistent Christian lives are more needed than anything else; but we are still uncertain, irresolute, procrastinating. I wish there were one here this morning who

would cease the refusal of the highest through procrastination, who would say, "As for me, now, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

Just once more pick up these words of Felix and look at them. "A convenient season," he says politely and cheerfully to Paul as he bids him good-night, and you perceive at once that he confidently thinks there will be a convenient season. He has not deeply perceived that serious truth which runs through all human life, that there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination a small fault? No, not in a universe where some things have to be done on time if they are going to be done at all. Says the tree in April, "I will not put forth my leaves now—in May;" and in May the tree says, "A more convenient season—June." But it would better take care. If leaves are not forthcoming in April or May or June, it is getting late. July is no time for leaves to come, and August is almost hopeless, and September is quite too late. He must have blind eyes who cannot see that truth running all through human life, a serious truth to which no cheap and easy optimism ought ever to blind our sight.

The truth is inherent in the very fact of growing up from youth to age. What a fairy-land of possibilities youth is! Listen to this lad talking. He is not sure, he says, yet, whether he is to be a civil engineer, or a business man, or a lawyer, or a pro-

fessional aviator; and he thinks he might be a minister. And, when he talks to you like that, what is more, you must listen to him seriously. He may be any one of them. The doors are all open. He is young. But we who have reached maturity have all these years been listening to a sound with which we are perfectly familiar, the sound of shutting doors. The range of our possible choices has been narrowing down. We know well enough that there are some things on this earth we never can do now. It is too late. Happy the man who has chosen right! Happy the man who has not put off too long doing something that he wanted to do very much indeed.

Alongside this fact of the inevitable passage of the years, the possibility of being too late is accentuated by the companion fact of habit. There may have been a time when you could straighten out the down-town streets of Boston, when they were meandering cow-paths along the shores of Massachusetts Bay, but it is too late now. They have been widened into streets and set in asphalt, and curbed in stone, and the life of the metropolis has immovably solidified itself around them. It is too late. So is the set of habit in the life of man.

It is no small matter, then, to say to young men and women in their fluid years of choice that they would better make the decision that concerns the deep interests of their spiritual life. For Felix is no ancient character alone. He has had a multi-

tude of reincarnations. Edgar Allan Poe was another Felix. He died as a result of a drunken night's revel in a saloon in Baltimore. You say he was bad? A man cannot content himself in speaking of such a man by saying, "He is bad." Look upon that brutal, drunken death, and think of what he wrote:

"For the moon never beams without bringing me
dreams

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee,
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

Surely, men who write like that are not all bad. There are harbours in the world where the harbour bar is so high that it never can be passed at low tide; so the ships wait for the high tide that they may enter in. So are the souls of men. Think of the flood-tides, then, that a man like Edgar Allan Poe must have had when the sky called to the deep, and in his heart there were voices speaking, like Paul before Felix, about righteousness and self-control and judgment to come. But he would not decide! Up and down, up and down, outside the harbour bar he sailed his craft, irresolute, procrastinating, till the tide went out, and then it was too late.

And this possibility of being too late is of course accentuated, so far as this earth is concerned, by death. I do not know whether that impresses me more when I think of my own death or when I think of the death of my friends. For, when death comes, it does come very suddenly. Ah, if you have anybody to love, you would better love him now. If you have little children to be brought up in the spirit of Jesus, you would better do it now. If you have quarrelled with some one with whom in your deepest heart you did not mean to quarrel, you would better make it right now. If you have any contributions that you can make to build here a juster, kindlier world for our humanity, you would better make it now. And if you know a Lord whose service is perfect freedom, a Saviour whose love is wider than the measure of man's mind, you would better choose Him now.

My young friends, there are three great choices that a man makes in his experience: First, his vocation, what he will do with his life; second, his marriage, who will be the mother of his children; and third, his faith, who shall be the guide of his soul. I think you know that Jesus Christ has a right to that place. Then put Him there—not tomorrow—TO-DAY.

V

THE WORLD UNDER THE ASPECT
OF TRAGEDY

By

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George Angier Gordon was born in Scotland in 1853. He received his academic training at Harvard College and has been minister of Old South Congregational Church, Boston, Massachusetts, since 1884. The pulpit style of Dr. Gordon is conspicuous for its literary beauty and for many years Old South Church has been one of the famous preaching points of North America. Dr. Gordon is both a great preacher and a great thinker. He was lecturer in the Lowell Institute Course 1900; University Preacher to Harvard 1886-90; to Yale 1888-1901; Lyman Beecher Lecturer, Yale 1901. He has published many books of great merit. Among these may be named: *The New Theodicy* and *The Witness to Immortality*.

V

THE WORLD UNDER THE ASPECT OF TRAGEDY

"Because his compassions fail not."

—LAMENTATIONS 3: 22.

THERE are four things present in all great tragedy. Every one of the tragic persons is to blame for the fateful complication, and no one is altogether to blame; the magnitude of the experience is unmeasured, the sin, the mistake, the suffering, the woe; mystery, like starless midnight, broods upon all the confines of being and overhangs the whole field of action; and lastly, there is pity arising in the heart of the spectator of the awful tragic movements, pity that purifies his heart, that exalts his soul, that brings with it a strange peace and a great indefinable hope.

Look into the heart of one of the greatest of all tragedies and see if these statements are not true. There is King Lear. He is to blame for vanity, over-fondness for affection, and credulity. Cordelia, that rare and beautiful soul, is to blame for temper and want of tact. If these two tragic persons in the drama are to blame, all the others surely are. Each one is to blame, and no one wholly to

blame. Then there is the extent of that tragic complication; persons, families, kingdoms are involved; sin, mistake, and suffering are there that no mind can measure. The last thing that the tragedy does for the one who beholds it is to melt his heart in compassion, and the compassion brings with it awe, exaltation, and a strange peace and hope.

The man of genius who wrote the text, a great deep-hearted patriot, looked at his nation under the aspect of tragedy. In 586 B. C. Jerusalem was laid waste by the Chaldeans, and the youth, the beauty, the promise, and the power of the people were carried away, and only the remnants remained of those not slain or not enslaved. His nation was a nation in ruin; thus he beheld it. Every one was to blame for the fateful complication, and no one was wholly to blame; the magnitude of the experience was evident, outrunning all possible measurement or comprehension; mystery was brooding over all like a thick cloud so that not even his prayers could pierce through. Then the resultant mood, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

There are many ways of regarding this world of ours, its tumult, its terrible processes of wickedness and of suffering. The text bids us look at it under the aspect of tragedy and behold the world-wide complication for which every living being is in

part responsible and for which no single individual, however wicked, is wholly responsible. Again, it bids us look at the immeasurable extent of the experience, the sin, the sheer ignorance, the perversity, the suffering, the woe; and once more, it bids us look at the mystery that overhangs the whole, dark, as I have said, as starless midnight, impenetrable, utterly inscrutable, and finally it directs attention to our own hearts, if we are men of faith, men of patriotism, of humanity, to the fountain flowing there of pity, of compassion; it seems to whisper that we are on the great world's altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God.

I ask you to look with me for a few moments at what the Eternal Compassion means as we reach it through the world regarded under the aspect of tragedy.

I

The first great attribute in compassion is the understanding mind. God knows His world from the inside. Sometimes during the summer I pass this church and look up at the windows scorched with heat, covered with dust, black, unmeaning, and then I come into the House of God, find the radiance of the summer sun flooding the building, and I see there the Good Samaritan still healing the sick, there the Apostles and the Prophets still holding forth the Word of Life, there the saintly and faithful ones silently running on their errands

of grace; lastly my eye lights upon the Parable of the Sower. "Behold, a sower went forth to sow" in the minds and hearts and wills of men. Here, from the inside, is the promise of a new and glorious world. God, the compassionate Father of men, understands His world from the inside. He sees His prophets still with their visions and their dreams. He sees His apostles still declaring the message of His Mind and Character; His healers and His faithful ones are all at work unseen and silent, the music of whose feet only the angels hear. And He sees a sower going forth to sow in the tragedy of the world new and better thoughts in the minds of men, and in their hearts new and deeper feelings, and in their wills new and greater purposes. He beholds, from the inside, vast movements out of the depths of the tragic world, promising by and by a morning without clouds.

Two members of His family went out to meet the Lost Son on his return, the elder brother and the father. The elder brother looked from the outside and said, "This son of yours who wasted your substance with harlots, you have feasted him." This is the outside view; it was absolutely correct as far as it went. Did it comprehend that young man's life? Ah, no. The father went forth to meet him, moved with compassion; he read the whole secret tragedy of his son's life, his sin, the plot into which his sin threw him, his mistake, his suffering, his woe, and the emergence as from

Erebus, of his soul seeking life. Which understood that son, the brother or the father? God understands His world from the inside and rests on the vision of the order that shall come forth out of the tragedy that now reigns.

II

The second great attribute of compassion is magnanimity. That is the Greek word for "great-mindedness." Greek tragedy, in one way, is unsurpassable, perhaps incomparable, in its simplicity, in its integrity, in its austere order and power. It has little or no humour in it, and herein it is surely surpassed by Shakespearian tragedy which composes in its own vast mind both the pathos and the humour of life. Look into your Hamlet again. Is there any scene anywhere of more piercing pathos or profounder tragedy than Ophelia, beautiful Ophelia, crazed with grief and yet undying in her loveliness, strewing flowers upon the new-made grave of her father who was slain by her lover. A little further on you find the grave-digging scene, with its pure, irresistible humour. The debate between the grave-diggers shakes one's soul with merriment; and there is the conversation of the callous, mirthful grave-digger with the sorrowful, awe-struck Hamlet. Here is humour, pure as the spirit that made it, coming from the very heart of humanity in this tragic world, and both the pathos and the humour are

reconciled, composed, wrought into a whole by the great-minded poet. Is not this true of life? Who is the most tragic figure in our American history? Abraham Lincoln. He moved, during the four long years of that tragic drama, the supremely tragic man, and on his right hand was the fountain of tears and on his left the fountain of mirth, both composed within the universal catholicity of his humanity.

And Jesus, the most tragic figure in all history, moves to His cross and on the way notes the irrationality and absurdity of the time in which He lives, and says, "This generation is like unto children sitting in the market-place who call unto their fellows and say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn." The tragedy and the comedy, He saw them deep as life and broad as the world, and He composed them in His own magnanimity.

Does not this help us toward the vision of the magnanimous God, Who makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good and Who sends His rain upon the just and the unjust, not because He is indifferent to moral distinctions, but because of His Eternal Magnanimity. Again, He rests on the vision of the issue of the tragic complication and waits in His Eternal Peace.

III

Finally, there is in compassion another vast at-

tribute that touches every one of us, and that is recreative moral power. The classic example is the Lost Son. What changed him, what made him new forever? It was his father's compassion. What changed Peter after that triple denial, that terrific treason of his soul to the truth and to his Master? The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. It was that compassionate look; the look not of reproach, not of indignation, not of the cry of vengeance, but of sorrow, of purest, divinest compassion, that made Peter new, and new forever.

How far our Lord's prayer upon the cross has gone: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." It has gone everywhere and been a source of moral hope to the despairing and recreative power to those crumbling into dust.

This is the gospel we all need. Am I not right in supposing that we wake many a morning to ask the question, "What right have I to pray to God, what right have I to speak to Him, I, so worldly, so selfish, so unmindful of things that are high, so far away from fidelity and honour?" And again, "What right have I to think of myself as a Christian? Where are my absentee ideals? Where are the great passionate loves that should follow Christian ideals? And where are the purposes that hold men's souls together? What right have I to call myself a Christian? What have I done for the great ideal causes of the world, those that represent

our whole higher civilization, without which our civilization would be the economy of brutes? What have I done for education, for hospitals, for the mission of the prophet and healer, for the builder of the Kingdom of God at home and abroad?" Then in our despair we think of the Infinite Compassion, and we bathe our whole troubled and failing soul in that, and we come forth again able to pray to God, able to claim the name of Christian, able to think of ourselves as soldiers and servants of the Ideal.

Every human being here this morning needs this gospel of the Eternal Compassion. Those who are morally successful need it, they are so much less successful than they should be. That those who are morally defeated need it, I do not need to say. They who have the prospect of long life before them need it; and we whose daily chant is, "We who are about to die salute thee," we need it. The whole race of men needs it. And when we come to our human world, what shall we say to it to-day, tempest-tossed and driven by the tides of its own wickedness and ignorance, what shall we say to it? Come back to the Eternal Compassion. Do not dwell simply on the guilt of all, the magnitude, the sin, and the woe, nor upon the mystery that like a pall overhangs the whole. Read it from the point of view of compassion, find its meaning there.

About the most tremendous words in the New

Testament are those that I read to-day, the most tragic I think, in the literature of mankind:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”

And yet the religion of Jesus is the religion of compassion, the religion of the Eternal Compassion that cannot finally be defeated.

Here is the gospel. Do not sit down and paint the blackness of the world. It knows how black it is. Tell it of the loving-kindness of the Lord and His unfailing compassion. Climb on the altar-stairway of the pity in your own heart up through the gloom and into the presence of God.

You recall Whittier's “Ten on the Beach.” How one recurs to that series of poems. Whittier, who regarded our human world so often and with such eyes under the aspect of tragedy, sings:

“Oh, the generations old
Over whom no church-bells tolled,
Christless, lifting up blind eyes
To the silence of the skies!”

There is the appalling tragedy. But he had faith to match it, faith in the Eternal Compassion declared through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“ Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,
Yearns to reach these souls in prison!
Through all depths of sin and loss
Drops the plummet of Thy cross!
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that cross could sound!”

There is the religion for this day. The complication is fateful and terrible, the experience in sin, folly, shame, and woe is immeasurable, the mystery is such that no finite mind can disperse or even mitigate. There remains the compassion in our own heart, aspiring to the Eternal Soul, finding in our human pity a ladder from time to Eternity, from finite to Infinite. When we climb that ladder we find ourselves in the presence of the Absolute Compassion; we behold our world under the aspect of Eternity, and our world under the aspect of tragedy finally melts through suffering, through all the ways of an inexorable justice, through recreative pity, into accord with a Universe all light, all love, all joy, all peace.

VI

WHAT IF CHRIST WERE NOT?

By

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Newell Dwight Hillis was born at Magnolia, Iowa, in 1858. The Presbyterian Church at Evanston, Illinois, was the scene of his first pastorate. At the death of Prof. David Swing he was called to the pulpit of Central Church, Chicago. In 1899 he was called to the pulpit of historic Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, as successor to Drs. Henry Ward Beecher and Lyman Abbott. Upon learning of the death of Dr. F. W. Gunsaulus who was, perhaps, the foremost American pulpit orator of this generation, Dr. Joseph Fort Newton wrote me saying: "Only Hillis can take his place as master of the Pulpit Art." Judged by the throngs that everywhere seek to hear him, by the number of times his words are quoted, and his name mentioned both in America and England, together with the popularity of his many written works, it is scarcely too much to say that there is no more influential living preacher in the English-speaking world.

Among Dr. Hillis' best known books are: *All the Year Round*, *The Battle of Principles*, *The Contagion of Character*, *The Fortune of the Republic*, *The Quest of John Chapman*, *A Man's Value to Society*, *The Investment of Influence*, *The Quest of Happiness*, *The Better America*, *The Influence of Christ in Modern Life*, *Great Books as Life Teachers*, *Great Men as Prophets of the New Era*.

VI

WHAT IF CHRIST WERE NOT? ¹

"And Jesus said to his disciples, Will ye also go away? And Peter answered, To whom?"

—JOHN 6:67, 68.

SEVERAL authors, with varying skill, have written books on the condition of the world if Christ were not. Every one is familiar with Jean Paul's *Dream of the Children*, coming into the church and sobbing out their sorrow because there is no Christ, and no Christmas, and that all alike are orphans. Henry Rogers wrote a book called "*The Eclipse of Faith*," in which he imagines that some powerful hand has wiped the influence of Christ out of civilization, as some hand wipes the chalk writing from the blackboard of the schoolroom. This brilliant author represents himself as going into his library to discover that every vestige of Christ's life and words has wholly disappeared. He opens his law books upon the legal safeguards protecting children in the poor-houses, the orphans, the chimney sweeps, the boys in the coal mines, the poor in tenements, the slaves everywhere, and lo! all these laws have disappeared, leaving paragraphs blank in some law books, with here and there whole pages, and indeed, entire

¹Published also in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

chapters, until what is left on the code is meaningless jargon. Alarmed, he turned to his histories of art, and where the Transfiguration had been he found a blank page, and to the galleries, but instead of the *Sistine Madonna* of Raphael and the *Ecce Homo*, by Guido Reni, and Rembrandt's *Prodigal Son*, with thousands of other masterpieces, he found only empty frames. Turning to the greatest poems of Dante and Milton, of Wordsworth and Tennyson and Browning, he found nothing but empty pages with the number of the page at the top. Having long loved architecture with a great passion, his thoughts flew to St. Peter's in Rome, to Milan and Cologne and Westminster Abbey, and lo, nothing remained there but great cellars, for when the cross went, the cathedrals fashioned in the form of that cross perished also. And then it was that Rogers realized that if Christ were not, the schools, the hospitals, the beautiful philanthropies, the missions, so beneficent in their influence at home and abroad, would all perish, as if shaken down by some cosmic earthquake, and this lawyer cried out that he would not want to live at all in a world where Christ was not.

And to-day we all have our vision of a revolution against Jesus in thought and life. What if in the stress of a great crisis representatives of the nations of the earth should meet together, ostensibly to destroy war and organize a universal peace. But when the chairman of the world's conference

begins his opening address, every one should notice the cynical look upon his face and the bitter note that had crept into his voice. The burden of his argument has to do with the economic wastes of Christian sympathy. He makes a plea against the industrial losses incident to Christ's story of the Good Samaritan. He estimates that our generation would save fifteen to twenty per cent. by coming out boldly for the anarchistic principle of every fellow for himself and the devil take the hindmost. He urges that the weak have no right to survive and should go to the wall. And that it is an outrage for the strong to be made unhappy by carrying the burdens of the weak. "Look abroad over the world—everywhere this Galilean's baneful influence is found. Why should the poorly born not die to-day, since they must die to-morrow? Why should not this conference declare plainly that Jesus of Nazareth, with His doctrine of love, pity and self-sacrifice, has laid an unbearable burden upon men? 'The key-word in this crisis,' he said, "is revolt. Let us return to Nature, and live as the beasts and birds in the forests live, and die as they die—namely, a natural death, having no regard for these petty dreams of Christian immorality ——" and this man carries the delegates, and with one voice they shout aloud, "Away with this superstition! Down with these spires!" And in the midst of the noise and confusion the twilight falls, and suddenly in the darkness a still, small

voice is heard, that in the silence of each heart turns to thunder, "What I have made shall be unmade."

It shall be as you have willed. "Henceforth the light that was given is withdrawn, and for angels' bread there shall be the apples of Sodom, and for the wine and the nectar of Paradise there shall be what you ask the dropping of asps and the poison of serpents." But going into the streets, these apostates look with altered eyes upon an altered world. Lifted, now, all the restraints of law! Wild men who through fear and shame had restrained their appetites suddenly reveal themselves. It was as if harpies and assassins had leaped from every alleyway upon those delegates, when the mob spirit burst loose. Then came the crashing of plate glass windows, the shrieks of night watchmen, the looting of splendid stores and shops, and in the suburbs the flaming houses heard the shrieks of women and the moans of little children, for the beast was let loose. In fact, there was no Christ to stand between the wicked man and his victims. The scene was as dreadful for that great city as if the bells of time had tolled the beginning of eternity, while the great serpent wound his coils about the earth to crush it into nothingness. That noise was the crash of falling domes, cathedrals and tumbling spires above gallery, and minister, with the sound on the pavement of pictures falling from their places, and statues

tumbling from their niches, when structures of art and literature and law and reform, manifest in architecture, came down in full ruin. It was as if the sun had tumbled from the sky, leaving a black socket.

Of course, if there were no Christ, our civilization would immediately change. Christendom would go, because there would be no estimating time from the new era, beginning with the day when that beautiful summer civilization set forth from Bethlehem. Time would doubtless begin with the story of Romulus and Remus. The year would then be 2753, and the dominant power would be the force of that imperial city, for militarism, law and government seated on the banks of the Tiber. Our civilization would perish and sink into dust with the sinking of the teachings and example of Christ. When we speak of civilization, we think of our ships, our office buildings, our factories, our great industries, our schools and libraries and churches; but all is an illusion. What we ought to think about is the ideas, affections and great convictions that realized themselves in these material structures. Suppose that every building in the United States were blotted out, leaving the forests, minerals, grains, fruits unchanged. Now bring in 100,000,000 Mohammedans to take the place of the Americans. Soon the different ideas of these Turks and Arabs would organize the wood and the iron and stone into mosques, minarets, palaces for

the Sultan, harems, slave markets, with horsemen armed with spears, planning a raid across the line upon Canada to the north or Mexico to the south. Different ideas coerce metals, forests, stone quarries, into different forms of architecture. All this gorgeous equipage of civilization is but an outer show that is as fleeting as the leaf. The thing that abides is the thought, affections and visions of the heart. Therefore, touch the teachings of Jesus at your peril! Destroy Christ's teachings as to His little ones, whose angels behold the face of His Father in heaven, and the orphan asylums and the kindergartens and the schools would dissolve, even though built of stone, like the snowflakes in August. We trace all granaries, all wheat shocks and sheaves back to that first perfect grain of wheat, in which all harvests were latent. We trace all noble buildings back to the first house. We trace a great river like the Mississippi back to a little spring. And we trace the outer institutions of civilization back to the teachings of Jesus as a soul made in the image of God, a soul that must love and serve its brothers and finally give its account unto God.

But if there were no Christ, to whom would the modern man go in the hour when the world reels beneath his feet, the fog chokes his throat, and he clutches at what Tennyson calls dust and straw and chaff, where he needs to find the rock? When the thoughtful man gives up that which is good

he expects to obtain something that is better. Will a man leave a stone house in time of storm to seek a frail tent? Man's body must have food, and his anxiety for harvest abides. Man's intellect must have the truth, and more and more he desires books, and thirsts for knowledge and beauty. All these musical instruments found in old museums, beginning with the reed, and the rude strings stretched over the mouth of sea-shells, and the drums of the medicine man, an ascending series that culminates in the pipe organ, are proofs of man's artistic needs. But what about the passion for righteousness, that deathless longing in the soul of Augustine, conscious of his black sins? That tragic cry of David calling unto the heavens for pity, forgiveness and cleansing: that muffled sob in the throat of Cicero, when he exclaimed, after the death of his beloved daughter, "Is there a meeting place for the dead?" When men were starving in Armenia for want of wheat, they substituted grass roots, and when Christianity is gone, men want a substitute. But it cannot be found in Confucius—Confucius has had centuries for his work, and the end is the Chinese Wall, national exclusiveness, polygamy, the parents' right of life and death over an unwelcome female babe, the headsman's axe. Confucius has produced China, and no American will exchange this city for what goes on upon the banks of the Yangste River. Not one of you will, as a substitute, accept the leader of the Brahmins,

or the Buddhists. India is a monument of that faith. The English army and Government have abolished their Juggernaut car, the burning of the widows upon the funeral pile of their dead husbands, and many other foul and cruel results of the Indian faith, but Brahminism stands for the caste system and you are Americans, believing in equality.

You can have no interest in the harem or the Zenana, or the idolatrous orgies, or in the worship of millions of gods or in the goal promised of a "dreamless sleep." You can achieve unconsciousness in a moment by a rope, a pistol, a little cyanide of potassium. But surely this is not the last work of a religion by which one can live and die? It is certain also that you will not accept as a substitute the Positivism of Comte, with his three hundred and sixty-five heroes and a new name for each day, to be used as a substitute for God. You know, as you read their names—Cicero, Lamartine, Goethe—that the names of these hundreds of men hold a certain admixture of selfishness and vice and meanness and even of crime. Nor can you substitute the Agnosticism or secularism of these teachers of to-day. Witness Martineau's question: "Will any moonlit form be seen kneeling in our Gethsemanes? And rising from prostrate anguish to sublime repose through the prayer, 'Oh, thou Eternal Not Ourselves that makes for righteousness, let this cup pass from me.' Will any cruci-

fied one lose the bitterness of death by crying, 'Oh, Stream of Tendency, into thy hands I commit my spirit'? To the martyr, stoned to death, will any heaven open when he exclaims, 'Great Ensemble of Humanity, receive me'? Will any penitent soul pour out its sorrows to a deaf ideal and shed its passionate tears on an abstraction that cannot wipe them away'? " But if there were no Christ, nought else is left save these abstractions. If the wheaten loaf is not, it remains for man to clutch at the fog bank and feed his hunger upon mist. It is Christ then—or nothing!

But if Christ were not, the human intellect loses its only rational explanation ever given of the problem of suffering and sorrow. To deny the existence of pain is as foolish as to deny an earthquake that destroyed those towns in Italy, or that tidal wave that destroyed Lisbon, or the war that cursed Belgium and France. Granted the existence of summer and the harvests, we must accept the winter also. Granted the garden, the palm trees and the fountains, we cannot deny the desert, and the occasional famine. Ours is a world over which, from time to time, troubles sweep like sheeted storms. No man can escape. Genius has sought out many inventions, discovered many secrets, but genius has never built a roof nor a door that can shut out trouble. Soon or late death robs us of our loved ones. At last comes the day when the grasshopper becomes a burden and desire fails.

At last the messenger upon his errand of release and convoy comes, not for others this time, but for you yourself. And in the world of selfishness, and ignorance, and sin Jesus comes into collision with the Pharisees, and Roman governors, and slave owners, and the more unyielding His convictions and ideals, the fiercer the collision. Denial is not enough; mere denial of pain will cure no torture of the soul in its Gethsemane. And then Jesus enters the scene. His message is that sufferings are educatory; that when the summer fails to turn the acid of the grapes to sugar, or sweeten the nuts, the frost completes the transformation; that gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity; that the self-sacrifice of one hero, with his death, means life and happiness to those who come after; that the greatest souls have come out of great tribulation, from the days of Moses and Paul, with their martyrdom and unaccomplished aims, to the days of Lincoln and Livingstone; that the richness of the soil begins with the glaciers' ice plough; that granite boulders are melted by fire billows, and that slowly, from upheaval, come harvests and a soil fit for growing the tree of life.

Earth's noblest souls have proven the soundness of Christ's teaching. Witness your own experience. Hours there are when for you everything fails, and doubts come in; but there is one face that shines like a star, the face of your beautiful

mother, who came through all the battle of life, gathering sweetness, purity, tenderness and love, and her testimony to the days when she learned in suffering the lessons of song, has held you to your work, like an anchor—sure and steadfast. And in that hour of transfigured intellect you know that Jesus' philosophy was sound, and His secret sure; that He alone had the clue of the maze, and that, therefore, you can go on through all the thunder of life's battle, serene in the conviction that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and that He makes all the sons of genius and of goodness to be perfect through suffering. The greatest discovery that our world has ever known was not Columbus's discovery of America, nor Newton's discovery of gravity, nor Franklin's discovery of electricity—Earth's greatest discovery—is the discovery of growth and character and salvation through suffering, through the surrender of the will of man to the Will of God, and the determination to do right though the heavens fall. That simple statement of the mission of sorrow and the sad plight of a world without pain has transformed the world and wrought a new era for the soul, just as the doctrine of Newton brought a new era to astronomy.

But if the world were without Christ, men would lose the motive to service and heroism. It was Jesus who made the sum of religion to be service and kindness, its emblem a cup of cold water and

its genius to be helpful. The soul is not self-propulsive. All sailing boats need winds for their sails. There is no locomotive that does not depend upon some exterior power named steam and coal. The human soul is dependent upon motives for its forward movement. What hurled Paul along the highway of his life? What drove him toward mobbings, scourgings, prisons, and unto death itself? That chariot of the Greek god was hurled forward by the fiery steeds of the sun, but as for Paul, in his eager, passionate desire to serve gladiators, slaves, fugitives, prisoners, was the word, "The love of Christ constraineth me." What led that Roman boy who had just heard the story of the Carpenter upon the Cross, that Roman boy who was a slave, and came in from the field to find that his young master had drowned, who asked for the place where his young master had gone down, and when they held him back, leaped into the black flood, and he felt around on the bottom of the lake and brought up the body, and died himself? Surely there was a motive back of this Roman boy's deed. He had heard that "he that loseth his life shall save it."

Recall also that little cripple in Switzerland, when the army of the Austrians was crossing the mountain pass. A great love of country welled up in the heart of the little hunchback. So when the sentinels felt that all was safe, because the heavy snowfall had come, and they flung them-

selves down to sleep, the cripple, at midnight, when all was still, kept his window up, drew the blankets a little closer, and with his head out in the snow listened, straining to hear the slightest sound. It was his vigilance that detected the approach of the enemy. The cripple awakened the sentinels, and the sentinels roused the soldiers, and the top of the pass was held and the valley saved. What miracles the love of country hath wrought! Ah, what a transformer love is! What impossible feats it accomplished! Ten thousand beautiful philanthropies were born when Jesus said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my little ones, ye have done it unto me." There is on a certain tropic tree a purple blossom, at the end of the bough. Travellers say that if you touch that crimson heart you slay the glorious shrub. Not otherwise touch at your peril Christ, with His love of the poor and the weak, for when the Master with His motive of love and brotherhood goes, then all the reforms, the beautiful philanthropies perish also.

But if there were no Christ, then the immortal hope perishes with Him. One December day, Harriet Martineau wrote her friend, saying: "For England the summer has gone, and for me the everlasting winter has set in." And when James Mill gave up the Christ he said, "That the clouds had slowly closed in and choked all hope, and that death had become only a leap into the dark, over

a chasm, whose sharp rocks held an unknown power for mangling." The philosophers argued. The poets have hoped for a meeting place of the dead. The lovers have cried out for the beloved one. The parents have sobbed, "Is death a door into another room? Or a fall into a black hole in the ground?" Then Jesus stood at the gate of the sepulchre, and His Message concerned the life immortal. What others talked about, He saw. His forehead grazed the stars, He looked over the top of the hill, named man's horizon, and saw afar off the sweet fields of living green in the land of pure delight. He plucked the fear out of men's souls as the husbandman plucks the tare out of the wheat, as the physician plucks the foul growth out of the fair body, and restores it to full health. He taught men that dying was home-going; that heaven was the Father's house, and that nothing could ever injure God's children, either here or there, either before death or after death. The sweetest music that ever fell over heaven's battlements are the words, "In my Father's house are many mansions." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And not until men prefer fog banks to wheat harvests, the will-o'-the-wisp light to the guiding star; not until they prefer candles flickering into the socket, to the summer-making sun, will they prefer these tawdry little superstitions before that Divine Teacher, whose music is sphere-music, and whose voice is the melody of the world.

VII

THE WEAPON OF PURITY,

By

JOHN A. HUTTON, D. D.,

Minister of Belhaven Church, Glasgow

John Alexander Hutton was born at Coatbridge, Lanarkshire, April 21, 1868. He was educated at Glasgow University; ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1892; called to Bristo Church, Edinburgh, 1898; to Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1900; and to Belhaven Church, Glasgow, in 1906, where he is still pastor. Dr. Hutton is a searching preacher, presenting a perfect blending of keen intellectuality and spiritual insight.

Among his written works, all of which are very popular, must be mentioned: *Guidance from Robert Browning*, *In Matters of Faith*, *The Winds of God*, *The Weapons of Our Warfare*, *Discerning the Times*, and *Victory Over Victory*.

VII

THE WEAPON OF PURITY¹

"As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee."—PSALM 42: 1.

NOTHING can hinder us from believing that the Eternal Spirit, Who sent Jesus into the world, sent also, securing it by an unfathomable play of events and circumstances, that hunger and dissatisfaction and moral tenderness which prepared a welcome for Him in the human heart. God's truth for an age never comes as a stranger to that age. On the contrary, God is so ready to hide Himself, that, when the truth comes, the wise men of the world at the time are permitted to suppose that it was they who discovered it, and that they were always sure that the thing was as now they perceive it to be.

It is not very common nowadays, except at street corners and in open spaces where one may still have the spectacle of a man plunging about in the backwash of an old controversial method—it is not very common nowadays to have it quoted against Christian truth, or against the force of a moral idea, that there is already a hunger and

¹ From *The Weapons of our Warfare* and with permission of Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton.

thirst for it in human hearts. On the contrary, the most lively school of thought in our day is apt to err on the other side, declaring that the one mark of truth is that it works, that it fits the facts and suits our very case. If the allegation is put forward that Christianity made its way in the world simply because it accommodated itself to the need of the time and offered people anything they wanted, it is a false accusation and can be repelled by some quite obvious facts. For example it is quite apparent from even a casual reading of the New Testament that the early Church is already aware that she is engaged in a warfare against the world. She sees clearly that it is her doom and calling to protest against the general mood of the time. The later books of the New Testament are concerned with almost nothing else than to warn Christians, both as individuals and as communities, that they have committed themselves in Christ to a Cause and a Spirit which will range the world against them, which will encounter the spiritual habit and inertia of long ages, which will provoke unsuspected antagonisms; in short, that Christianity is a declaration of war, an unsheathing of the sword; "Ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world." I detect no trace of accommodation in such a saying, and it is but one of a thousand. The fact is, Christianity did fall in with the profound neces-

sities of the human heart in those days. But the necessities in the human heart which laid hold on Christianity were the last necessities of our common human nature, the invincible cries which will always break from man, because he is what he is. And in order to help man at the depths Christianity did not hesitate to offend and rebuke man in his superficial and temporary requirements.

It is true, I think, of every high thing which assails us and appeals to us in the name of God, that there is something in us which holds out hands to it and there is something in us which at the same moment hesitates or shrinks back. It is a sure sign that we are face to face with something from God, something with which we had better come to terms, that at the same moment we want it and we do not want it, we like it and we do not like it.

When Jehoshaphat and Ahab were in a difficulty as to whether they should go to war against Syria, some officials had assured them that it was God's will that they should go. Jehoshaphat, who was a good man, was not easy in his mind. It seemed to him that those officials had been suborned to say what they had said. "Is there not some man of God," said he to Ahab, "by whom we might enquire of the Lord?" "There is," said Ahab, with some heat; "there is one man by whom we might enquire of the Lord, Micaiah, the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy

good concerning me but evil." "That is the very man for us to hear," said Jehoshaphat.

There is always something in truth which we like, and something which we do not like. It is always proof that the matter is one with which we ought to come to terms—that we like it and do not like it at the same moment. Christianity had those simultaneous marks of truth: there was something in it which the world resented and hated, and tried to put away; and all the time there was that in it for which the world in the last solitudes and realities of its own self-consciousness pathetically cried out. Looking back over those days, and observing with what fidelity to its own ethical genius the Church dealt with the world without indulging that mood, how it refused to follow the easy way to power, how it was able at once to condemn the world and to attract it—looking back, I say, it is not possible to doubt that wherever the two or three were met together Christ was in the midst, guiding.

There were three lines, we were saying, along which Christianity moved and overcame the world; and first by the attractiveness of its faith.

Let me pass now to the second element of power—the new and haunting quality of Christian goodness. By the wonderful pressure, as we believe, of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men, there was already abroad in the world in the first days of Christianity a real and widely experienced

desire for moral purity and cleanness. It was one of those times which come when, it may be, men do not see their way clearly, when they do not see for the time being how things on a wide scale are to be improved, when the mind in consequence is driven in upon itself, and we perceive that although there may be no open vision, nevertheless we need not be idle in the work of God; that there is a work to be done within ourselves. However, it may be explained historically, there had come over the human heart in those days a great yearning to be made clean, to be free from moral guilt, to be done with all interior disorder and entanglement. In those days, and in pursuit of this personal rightness and integrity, the most popular ceremony was a sacrament called the "taurobolium." Let me say what it was, leaving it to yourselves to perceive what a place for Christ life had evidently laid open in the souls of men. In the mystery of the "taurobolium" the suppliant stood or knelt beneath a scaffolding of wood. On the wooden platform above his head a bull was slain, and its blood poured through the grating, drenching the suppliant beneath.

It was man's profound insight into his moral necessities. It was man, urged by the Spirit of God, trying to find his way home. It was his discovery, guided by delicate organs of moral perception, that death was the only way to newness of life; and that it was not his own death merely

which brought down the blessing, but his sharing as it were in the very life of death.

It was into this troubled and uneasy world, with its pathetic and puzzled half-beliefs, with its insistent cry for better things, that the disciples of Jesus came. They lived their life before the eyes of men. They declared that they had achieved this moral peace and cleanness. Men and women joined them from the world, men and women in many cases with such a past history that outsiders made merry over their new profession. "If He were a good man," it had been said of their Master, "He would have known that this woman was a sinner." And the world said the same of the Church. But even the world could not deny that those who had been sinners took on a new grace, as though by some mysterious chemistry the very elements of their nature had been transformed. Sufferings came to them, as we shall see, sufferings of such ingenuity and horror, that we cannot even bear to describe them; but they endured by the help as it seemed of some Ally beyond nature and beyond mere human experience. All their words and ideas were full of a beautiful confidence as to the way by which God was pleased to be leading them. Nothing could come upon them unawares. If they lived, well; if they died, once again it was well. If the sky was fair for them, they would praise the Lord; if the sky was foul, they still had the resource of prayer. The Prince of this world

came and found nothing in them. They were prepared for everything. If you asked them the secret of this supernatural peace, they might utter some mysterious word like "Maranatha—the Lord is near." They had found what all the world was seeking for. The presence of some Holy Guest hung about them, at their work, in their home, purifying everything, sanctifying everything. This Holy One had once upon a time been here; they themselves knew some one who had actually spoken with Him; or in later years they knew many who had in turn known one who had actually seen Him die on Calvary and appear again, risen from the dead, in the upper room.

At the time when He went away He had promised to come again. It might be that they had been looking for Him to come too soon; because now years had passed and He had not yet come. But the delay, though a disappointment to their natural sense, was not so hard to bear as the world might think. True, He had not come; still He had come, and was with them always. As St. Paul had said, "There is first that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual!" In the growing refinement of their natures they began to ask themselves what more they would have from their Lord than He was daily giving them. In any case He had not left them comfortless; they had bread to eat that the world knew not of. Besides, it might be God's will for them that they should go to Him

rather than that He should come to them. And death was now no dreadful trap-door through which the soul fell down into darkness. It was the gateway into new life—a gate which they had seen opened for many of their friends, and as it opened they had seen with their own eyes the light of that glorious place, falling upon the countenance of one whom Christ was calling home. They were so very sure of God that they were tempted sometimes to wish that this present life would come quickly to an end; but their teachers and their sacred books had bidden them be patient and show by their very patience that they had no doubts about God. In the second century the leaders of the Church had to issue instructions to Christian people that they should pray for the delay of the Lord's coming. His communion with them was already sufficient, it would appear. Meanwhile, they wanted to spare humanity, to increase the number of those who might share in the glory of the Lord.

So on and on, one might imagine and describe the kind of life they lived, for whom the memory of Jesus was still a living thing and for whom that memory was penetrated by an unquestioning hope.

That is the point which Pater makes in his *Marius the Epicurean*, the story of one who acted as the amanuensis to Marcus Aurelius. (The story opens with Marius as a little boy leaving home for school, for the Eton of Harrow of his

day. His mother wanted to say something to him as a last instruction, but did not know what to say—and there is nothing more difficult than to know what to say at such a time: the Lord Himself did not know what to say to His disciples when He was about to leave them, so He did not say anything at all, but took a towel and washed the disciples' feet—this mother did not know what to say just as the last thing she would like to say. She took the boy away into her room, and as they looked across the Campagna, she put her hand upon his shoulder and said, "Marius, a white bird which you are to carry with unsullied wings across a crowded public place; your soul is like that." That is only a hint of the incomparable felicities both of feeling and expression which you will find in Marius, which I have no hesitation in advising you to read.)

What impresses Pater in those first three centuries is the wonderful consecration which Christianity brought, the consecration of the elementary functions of life—marriage, birth, death. How it purified those elementary functions! How it placed the proper garland upon the brow of woman, and hailed in each little child a gift from heaven! Perhaps you are not aware that in those days, which were in so many ways so intellectual and advanced, there were moral enormities that simply are staggering to us. It was a very common thing, not only among ignorant people—to

throw out little children who were not wanted by their parents. It contributed enormously to the enlargement of the Church in its membership, that the Church picked up those little children and trained them, creating within them by the atmosphere of love a natural appetite for the things of the Spirit.

We only need to know our own essential nature—that by God's appointment there is something in man which will forever lay him open to the appeal of goodness; that the sight of moral beauty, of an obvious contentment in this world and victory over its fear, will always raise in the souls of men who behold such things the question whether this is not the one true way—we only need to believe that man is so made and is finally susceptible to such things, to see that such a community of faith and hope and love as was the Church of the early days, was bound to gain the victory over a disordered and unhappy world. Like God Himself, man "is the same yesterday and to-day and forever." We often ask ourselves by what means the Church of Christ shall ever again resume the story of her own best days. There is only one way. It is no part of our duty to lay schemes for achieving worldly success. We have but one thing to do. We are here as Christians and as Christian communities to attest to the world, and to make incarnate a quality of life which is beyond its reach. We cannot by any stated argument convince those

who are without the reality of the deepest things. Only the presence of holy and beautiful lives will ever awaken in the world the sense of its own capacity and in the same moment the sense of its own shortcoming.

In the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, it is not without significance that in each of the gospel narratives the incident occurs just after Jesus had taken little children into His arms and had laid hands upon them and blessed them. And what the conjunction of incidents means for me is just this: it was the sight of that perfectly simple and beautiful thing which stirred in the man's heart an unsuspected or half-suspected craving for whatever of the same blessedness might yet be possible for such as he.

For this is our faith, as it was the faith of our Master, that the presence amongst men, of perfect moral beauty, will soon or late break the bars of iron in sunder and throw open the everlasting doors.

VIII
WILLING AND KNOWING

By
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William Ralph Inge was born at Crayke, Yorkshire, June 6, 1860. He was educated at King's College, Cambridge University; Vice President of the Royal Society of Literature; Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge and Hertford College, Oxford; and Gifford Lecturer St. Andrew's University 1917-18. In 1911 Dr. Inge became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. Known to many as the "Gloomy Dean," Dr. Inge is one of the most profound thinkers in the active ministry to-day, and as a scholar, has few, if any, equals in the English-speaking world. Among his published works are: *Christian Mysticism*, *Speculum Animæ*, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism*, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, *Faith and Knowledge* and *Outspoken Essays*.

VIII

WILLING AND KNOWING

"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."—JOHN 7:17.

THESE words of our Blessed Lord seem to me to point the way to the solution of a very old controversy, which still divides us. What is the nature of religious faith? Is it an act of trust, or is it conviction? Is it a working hypothesis, or the result of reasoning? Is it an attitude of the will, which selects for acceptance those ideas which help us to live as we desire to live, or is it an apprehension of absolute truth? The question was already discussed by the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, some of whom based faith on the mystical intuition which enlightens the eyes of the understanding, while others maintained that its nature is practical, and in no wise speculative.

I wish to consider the question as a religious, not as a philosophical problem, and to treat it as a problem which deeply concerns every one of us. Let me sum up shortly what might be said on each side.

Faith is and must be a venture; we walk by faith, not by sight. Faith is the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis. It must be a

matter of the will rather than of the intellect, both because ultimate truth is beyond our reach, and because, whether consciously or unconsciously, our world is constructed out of those facts which interest us and bear upon our own needs. We do not and cannot see life steadily and see it whole; we see what lies in our path—the stepping-stones and stumbling-blocks which we have to use or avoid. We have to practice the difficult art of living in a world which we do not understand. Religion is the chief portion of this art. Truth is relative to our spiritual need; it has been said whatever helps our souls is true. From this point of view, religion is a kind of mind-cure; it is to be studied and practiced as a man learns an art or uses a remedy. If we wish to learn an art, we put ourselves under a training which experts tell us will make us proficient in it; we are content if this result follows. If we wish to remedy some physical defect in ourselves, the true remedy is that which cures us. For example, if our eyesight is bad, we buy a pair of spectacles which will help us to see like other people. We do not inquire whether the spectacles are true; their value for us depends on their not being true for healthy eyes. We are told that those who do not understand that this is the function of religion, criticize the beliefs of their neighbours from a wrong point of view. Such books, for example, as Lord Morley's essay on *Compromise*, waste a great deal of virtuous indig-

nation on the intellectual disingenuousness of religious people who he says profess to believe dogmas which they ought to know to be untrue. The assumption all through such books is that religious truth is a branch of scientific truth, whereas it is really a method of ordering the whole life with a view of the formation of character.

Those who think in this way set but a small value on the labours of critics and philosophers, unless they devote their talents to the advocacy of traditional dogmas. The Liberal Churchman seems to them to be a man who has taken up, perhaps almost by accident, the study of theology, and who treats it, in an abstract manner, like any other science, a method under which its religious value evaporates, and its therapeutic efficacy almost disappears. They can find many well-worn maxims ready at their hand, such as that "God has not willed to save His people by dialectic," and that the heart has its reasons which the intellect knows not of.

Scholars and thinkers must admit the partial truth of this charge against them. They know how easily the logical intellect transforms vital interests into dialectical counters. They know how easy it is to personify their own opinions and those of their opponents, labelled probably with their names, and to forget, in the excitement of an intellectual tournament, that they are dealing with the mysteries of time and eternity, and with the

struggle of overburdened men and women to find their way and to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. The intellectual study of religion is an abstract science; so are all other sciences; and though the aim of philosophy is to coördinate and at last to rise above abstractions, no sane thinker counts himself to have apprehended.

And yet I cannot think that we ought to be content with a merely subjective and relative standard of truth in religion. The God who has made us for Himself, and who will not let our hearts rest till they find rest in Him, has not so hidden His face from us that we cannot know Him, however dimly and imperfectly, as He is. And we cannot really hold that there are for us two standards or two kinds of truths, one speculative or scientific, and the other practical. Our minds are not divided or divisible, and we cannot with impunity play tricks with our reason, either to stimulate our wills or to win inward peace. There is after all a sterling sincerity in the negations of the honest rationality which we miss in such utterances as this of Renan: "What a delight to the man who is weighed down by six days of toil, to come on the seventh to rest upon his knees, to contemplate tall columns, arches, and altar, to listen to the chanting, to hear moral and consoling words. It is the privilege of pure sentiment to be invulnerable and to play with poison without being hurt by it." This is no doubt a crude and half-contemptuous

description of a very common attitude, which is familiar to us in the phrase "the consolations of religion," as if religion were a species of anodyne, a cure for soul-ache. There is surely a levity, an indifference to truth, or a deep scepticism, in those who can use such language. I prefer the harsh dictum of the rationalist, that every wish to believe, when it is dragged into the open, is a reason for doubt. There is an asceticism of the intellect, which though it may be carried too far, is itself a noble thing. There are men who are afraid to accept what their souls—their whole selves—bid them to believe, because they know that they long to believe it and because it cannot be proved. This kind of renunciation is an act of homage to truth as an absolute principle; I do not think that it injures the character, though it makes life less bright than it ought to be. But in those who indulge what is called the wish to believe; who fly under the wings of authority to escape the buffetings of doubt; who grasp at an inward peace which they have not earned; who make religion a matter of emotion or sentiment or æsthetic thrill, I have observed that not only the intellect but the moral sense loses its finer qualities. A faith that is procured ready-made gives but little guidance where no authoritative precepts can be had. It is in religious persons of this type that we find the most incurable obtuseness in the face of new duties not sanctioned by tradition—such for example as our

obligations to the lower animals, and to posterity. Nor do I think that this kind of religion often rises above enthusiastic loyalty to its institution; it does not seem to those outside to do much in making the institution more worthy of loyalty.

The social psychologists have failed, I think, to tell us what religious beliefs ought to be. They have missed what is the most essential quality of faith—that is a devotion to absolute values, to which we pay homage as being absolute, eternal, universal and indestructible truths which claim our allegiance in their own right, as ends in themselves, and not means to anything else, not even to our own happiness or the happiness of others, or a better social order, or anything else that we wish for on earth. The religious man, of course, believes that the universe is under divine law, and that this law is ultimately in agreement with the spiritual laws which have been revealed to us. He believes that if he surrenders happiness as his immediate aim, he will win, for himself and others, what Christ in the Beatitudes calls blessedness, but which may, if we will, be called a higher and deeper happiness. But the objects of faith are beyond this bourne of time and place; they are not to be degraded into means for any earthly end; nor do their truth and value consist in the use which we can make of them.

The psychologists have failed to show us what faith ought to be and may be. But they have done

good service in laying bare the actual springs of what often passes for faith. The mind of the average man is a confused medley of sentiments, prejudices, and self-centered interests, which determine his opinions on religion as on anything else. "Such as men themselves are, such will God appear to them to be," as a deep Christian thinker of the seventeenth century said. The religion of the average man is a reflection of his undisciplined self—an unassorted mixture of second-hand opinions, adopted in laziness and maintained in obstinacy. He never probes his mind, and is actually unable to distinguish between what he would like to believe and what he has reason to believe. The luxuriant crop of superstitions which at the present time chokes the soil of the rational mind is the result of a mental indiscipline which hardly rises to the level of intellectual dishonesty, because the intellect never acts freely at all.

The best account of faith that I know is that of Clement of Alexandria, who was perhaps not a great philosopher, but was one of the most enlightened as well as the most attractive of the Christian Fathers. He says that there are three stages in the spirit life.—Faith, Knowledge and Love. Faith, he defines as compendious Knowledge, and Knowledge as scientific Faith. Faith and Love, he says, are not taught. He means that Faith begins as an act of choice; it is an experiment which passes into experience. It verifies itself with the help of

reverent and open-minded inquiry, an inquiry which is only possible to those who are earnestly trying to live out their thoughts and to think out their lives. (He is not afraid of the word of Gnosis, and will not surrender it to heretical Gnostics; the word is too precious, for it asserts that knowledge of God is possible to man.) And the pursuit of Knowledge, as he understands it, is as far from leading us to arid pedantry and juggling with bloodless categories, that it makes us fit to receive the gift of divine Love, which, like Faith, is "not taught." This Love, he says (for like all Platonists he ends in mysticism), is the communion, or even the union of the knower and the known. He who has reached this state may be said to be, in the words of St. Luke, equal to the angels. It is the same path from earth to heaven which is traced by Coleridge:

"He first by fear uncharmed the drowsed soul,
Till of its noblest nature it can feel
Dim recollections; and thence soared to hope,
Strong to believe whate'er of mystic good
The Eternal dooms for His immortal sons;
From hope and firmer faith to perfect love
Attracted and absorbed; and centred there,
God only to behold and know and feel
Till by exclusive consciousness of God
All self annihilated, it shall make
God its identity—God all in all!
We and our Father one
And blest are they
Who in this fleshly world, the elect of heaven,

Their strong eye darting through the deeds of
men,
Adore with steadfast unpresuming gaze
Him, nature's essence, mind and energy;
And gazing, trembling, patiently ascend,
Treading beneath their feet all visible things
As steps, that upward to their Father's throne
Lead gradual."

The same writer says in prose: "Evidence of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it. Rouse him if you can to the self-knowledge of his need of it, and you may safely trust it to its own evidence, remembering only the express declaration of Christ Himself, No man cometh unto me unless the Father draw him."

I wish to apply these thoughts to the matter of religious doubt. We must begin by admitting that our strongest and most permanent interests will almost certainly determine our view of the world generally, and therefore, our religion, which sums up our experience of life. There are some whose world is a playground, or a counting-house, or an arena, or a stage. That is the world in which they have chosen to live, and they have made for themselves a world of this kind, in their own image. It is not the real world, but it is their world; and there is not much room for God in it. Until they change their dominant interests, they will see no other world; they will continue, in the word of the Old Testament, to live in the light of the sparks

that they have kindled. Therefore, the first question which we have to ask ourselves is, What are my dominant interests in life? What are the subjects to which my leisure thoughts most readily turn? What do I most earnestly desire to gain; and what do I most anxiously fear to lose? These are not very difficult questions to answer, but if we have not made a habit of putting them to ourselves, the result may be a startling revelation to us. We shall probably find that we have indulged ourselves in certain trains of thought far too frequently, and that we have allowed them almost literally to cut deep channels in our minds, so that it has become very difficult to control our imaginations, and to observe a due proportion in the amount of attention which we pay to the various interests of life. Perhaps most serious faults, and most disastrous blunders spring from disease of the imagination caused by want of control over our leisure thoughts.

But I am now dealing rather with the effect of attention and want of attention upon our religious beliefs. I have said that we all surround ourselves with a world after our own likeness. Is the world which we have made for ourselves a world in which there is room for God and an eternal spiritual world? And since we have to admit that our wishes as well as our habitual interests affect our beliefs, are we so living that the Christian standard of values would be welcome to us?

Would it perhaps demonetize the currency in which we do all our business, and a good supply of which we have tried to keep in store? The principle that a motive for belief is a reason for doubt is a principle which must be vigorously applied to our unbeliefs as well as to our beliefs. Most people when they reach mature years, construct for themselves a rough scheme of values; they make up their minds what they want, how they mean to get it, and what price they will have to pay. It is most inconvenient to have this scheme upset. It is as inconvenient as to find that the country in which we have invested our savings has gone bankrupt. It is, therefore, possible and only too easy, to create for ourselves strong vested interest in that kind of world which Christianity tells us not to love. And if we find ourselves confronted by formidable obstacles in the way of faith, we must ask ourselves whether perhaps we have not put them there ourselves. And if our hearts acquit us on this charge, we have still to ask ourselves whether, supposing that there is a God, and a Holy Spirit who is willing to be the Guest of our souls, we have given Him, or rather ourselves, a chance. How many minutes, on an average, do we give in the day to thinking about Him? Five minutes, out of seventeen hours of waking life? If this is so, we cannot be surprised if the spiritual world is dim and faint for us. The loss of faith is mainly caused by the neglect of private prayer.

and meditation. Religion is crowded out by other interests, most of which we should ourselves admit to the frivolous. We, none of us, really think that the spiritual world is moonshine; but we are troubled to find that it does not touch our experience much. Have we any right to be surprised? Do we give ourselves a fair chance? When we remember the words of the Psalmist, "I have set God always before me," and St. Paul's admonition, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," we must realize how unlike our inner life is to that of God's saints. I am not suggesting that we should load the dice and create for ourselves a stake in ideal values; but we must admit that if these values exist, we are foolish not to take far more trouble to realize them and live by them. Frequent acts of recollection; short ejaculatory prayer before beginning my task or occupation; a few minutes of meditation on our knees—this is not much to give to that which alone makes life worth living. It is difficult at first, no doubt, so is the exercise of any faculty which we have left untrained. But if we have not made the effort, do not let us assume either that man cannot commune with his Maker, or that we are religiously ungifted, destitute of the faculty which in its fullest development we call saintliness or religious genius. There are great differences in human endowments, on this side as on others, and there is no reason to think that God looks with especial favour on those

who are devotional by temperament. The twelve apostles, so far as we can gather from what we know of them, were brave and loyal men, but, at any rate at first, rather dull listeners to their Master's highest teachings. Most of us are not called to be saints, any more than we are called to be poets or musicians; but we have the capacity for drawing near to God in prayer and we cannot with impunity allow this faculty to rust unused.

Religious doubts, it seems to me, fall into two classes. Sometimes they gather round some particular doctrine, which we have been taught to regard as an essential part of the Christian faith. It is probable that this doctrine will be some alleged event in the past or future, for which we have come to think that the evidence is untrustworthy or insufficient. I do not think that we have any right to crush or inhibit such doubts. Even Pascal, with all his distrust of human reason, says, "He who doubts and searches not is at the same time a grievous wrong-doer and a grievously unfortunate man." The last words remind me of a line of Euripides, which applies to all who shirk the full human experience, that of domestic life for example: "He suffers less, but we cannot envy his good fortune." I believe that we ought to pull these skeletons out of the cupboard, and look them squarely in the face. And having done so, the first questions which we ought to ask are: Is this doctrine really part of Christianity as I understand

it? If it is true, what does it prove? And if it is not true, what does it take away with it? Is there any part of my vital religion which stands or falls with this doctrine? It may be that we have listened to that mischievous type of apologists whose favourite weapon is the dilemma. If you do not believe this, you cannot believe that, and if you do not believe that the whole of Christianity goes by the board. We must not attend to them. If we find that the doctrine which seems to us to be insufficiently attested is not of vital importance to us, we may cease to trouble ourselves about it. Sometimes we may discover later that it is better supported than we thought; more often perhaps we may conclude that it is a bit of scaffolding which the fabric no longer needs, or an outwork which is no longer of any use in the fortifications of the citadels. The late Father Tyrell wrote an able book called *Lex Orandi*, in which he discusses what he calls the "prayer-value" of dogmas. He is perhaps dangerously near saying that the truth of dogmas consists in their prayer-value, which is the subjective or pragmatist position described in the opening part of my sermon to-day; but I think it is true that we need not trouble ourselves much about a dogma which has no prayer value for us. It makes all the difference in our attitude toward doubt whether we regard it as a temptation of the devil, or as part of the discipline which we are called to undergo. Doubts of the kind which we

have just been considering are not temptations of the devil, and we have no right to run away from them, and stifle them under authority. If one authority tells us to believe, and another authority tells us to disbelieve, and we follow the first authority without examining the evidence, that is tantamount to saying, "I will believe because I choose," which is not an attitude for an intelligent or even an honest man.

But there is another kind of doubt, which does not attach to any particular doctrine, but to the existence of God Himself, and the spiritual world. It is not so much that any anti-theistic arguments seem to us to be cogent, as that the whole subject matter of religion seems to us to be unreal. As the French encyclopædist said: "The question of God lacks actuality." This is a very different thing from the other kind of doubt, and only a bigot will confound them. In dealing with this second type of doubt, it is a pertinent and not an impertinent question to ask whether there is anything in the character of the doubter to account for his failure to see what too many others are the most certain of all truths. Theologians have often misused a perfectly legitimate argument by hinting at secret sins, moral obliquities of some kind, as the probable source of want of faith. It is certainly true that only the pure in heart can see God, and we must extend the meaning of purity of heart to all unfaithfulness to the light that is in us. The

double heart, it has been said, makes the double head. But it is not necessary to assume that irreligious persons are evil livers. My argument this morning has been that inattention and want of interest are quite enough to account for the feeling of unreality which for many of us surrounds the spiritual world, and that however real and important the truths of religion may be, we cannot expect to feel their reality and importance if we hardly ever think of them.

I know that most of the younger generation are disposed to think that there is something small and selfish about care for their own souls, and that it is enough for them to cherish, on the one side, what a recent writer has called loyalty to the beloved community, the Church, and on the other, ardour for social reform. A breezy, familiar, confident religion, with this dual basis, has been brought back from the battle-field of France. But believe me, you can serve both the Church and the country best by deepening your own personal faith. The reason why organized religion has lost nearly all its credit, is not that it is not sufficiently organized, but that it has no vision of the invisible; it does not hold up before the nation that standard of values which Christ revealed to us; it does not believe from its heart with that noble rebel Mazzini, that the cause of all our trouble is the gradual substitution of the worship of material interests for the adoration of holy ideas; and so it

fluctuates between shallow and mischievous political agitation and an equally shallow and eclectic medievalism. You will do far more good in your generation by being devout and open-minded Christians, "adding to your faith knowledge" in the spirit of the words of Clement which I quoted to you, than by plunging into movements which are too superficial to add any real strength to the cause of religion. If we are to have a religious revival, it must be unmistakably a spiritual revival—it must flow from an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with His gifts of wisdom and understanding of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord; it must point straight to the Cross of Christ, and to heaven into which He is ascended. Such a revival can begin only in hearts which have prepared themselves earnestly to receive the heavenly Guest; and where can we hope to find the first promise of it if not here,¹ the home of young life and of ancient wisdom, the storehouse of things new and old—new things that were old before the world was, and old things which spring ever fresh from the fountains of the river of God? If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. The way is not yet clear before us; many old things are passing away, and we do not know what is coming. It is a time for thought and prayer and self-discipline. "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning

¹ Oxford University.

me.” Things may be clearer ten years hence, when the seed sown in a million heroic graves has had time to grow. Meanwhile, remember St. Paul’s words to Timothy, “Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine”; and to thyself first.

IX

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

By

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Charles Edward Jefferson was born at Cambridge, Ohio, August 29, 1860. He received his academic and theological training at Ohio Wesleyan and Boston Universities. He was ordained in the Congregational ministry in 1887. He was pastor of Central Church, Chelsea, Mass., 1887-1898. In 1898 he became pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle Congregational Church, New York, where he is still located. Dr. Jefferson, during the spring and summer of 1922, acted in the capacity of Special Preacher to the City Temple, London. He is uniquely a preacher's preacher and has, through his written and spoken work, yielded an amazing influence over his contemporaries of the pulpit.

Among his many written works must be mentioned: *Under Twenty, Old Truths and New Facts, The Character of Jesus, Doctrine and Deed, The Minister as Prophet, Things Fundamental, The Ministering Shepherd, The Building of the Church.*

IX

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST¹

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."—ROMANS 8:9.

SO said the first great interpreter of the Christian religion. The statement is straightforward, emphatic and beautifully clear. Only fifteen words, and all but one of them monosyllables. One does not need a dictionary to read them. A child of six can take them in. It is a sentence without mist or fog. It has in it the note of finality. It is positive, dogmatic, solid as an axiom. It is in the style of Euclid. Paul is not setting forth a thesis for discussion. There are some things not open for debate. A few questions are closed. We say there are two sides to everything, but there are not two sides to this. You cannot say that if a man have not the Spirit of Christ it makes no difference. Everybody sees that if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. There are axioms in religion as in mathematics. This is one of them. Like all axioms, this one is a basal truth, and therefore a truth to start with. In working out intricate problems we must begin with fundamental principles. The only way to illumine

¹Delivered before the Copenhagen Peace Conference (1922). Published also in *The Christian Work*.

a confused situation is to flash on it the light of an elemental truth. Unless we begin with facts which are incontrovertible we cannot prosper in our efforts to solve the problems of life. To begin with forms is a constant temptation. It is the surface things which catch the eye and arrest the mind. It is easier to deal with measures than with truths, to frame programs than to mould dispositions, to devise machinery than to create a new heart. Measures and programs and machinery are indispensable. Without them we cannot go on. They deserve not a little of our time and our thought. But our machinery and schedules and policies are all the time disappointing us, because we have neglected the things which lie deeper. We get into morasses because we start at the wrong point. The house falls because we do not go down to the rock. In this Cathedral, dedicated to God, in Whom we live and move and have our being, to Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, and to the Holy Ghost, our Advocate and Guide, it is fitting that before we enter on the work that lies before us we should think together of some things which are fundamental and all controlling.

“If a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Too often we begin and end with the words of Jesus. His words are wonderful. They lie before us in the New Testament. They are often on our lips. It is easy to repeat them and to conjure with them. Does the Church pos-

sess the words of Jesus? Yes. Does the Church possess the Spirit of Christ? That is an embarrassing question. But if the Church have not the Spirit of Christ it is none of His, no matter how diligent it is in repeating His words. "Many will say to me Lord, Lord."

Sometimes we do not begin with Christ at all; we begin with the Church, its forms of worship, its sacraments, its orders, its government, its creedal statements, its traditions. But the first great Christian preacher did not begin in his thinking with the Church; he began always with Christ. To him Christ is all. If we have the Spirit of Christ we have everything. If we have not His Spirit we have nothing. That was Paul's conviction. See what this means. A man may be baptized with water, but if he is not baptized into the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. A man may come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper all through his life, but if he have not the Spirit of Christ he has no part with Him. A man may repeat the most orthodox of the creeds, but if he have not the Spirit of Christ he is not a believer. Paul had a genius for seeing through shams. He always cut to the core, he grasped the essence, he made his way into the marrow. He did not allow his eye to wander from the main point. He saw that if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. This is not a dictum to be recited or quibbled over, but a truth to be pondered over and

accepted and built on. Let us reckon with it to-day.

"If a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Paul liked to say this. He says it now in one way and now in another. Like all great teachers, he varies his language in order that the truth may have a better chance to capture the mind. To the Romans he says it in prose. To the Corinthians he says it in poetry. To the man on the Tiber he is as curt and matter of fact and peremptory as Pontius Pilate with his "What is written is written." To the Greeks he is as picturesque and opulent as Plato. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love—in other words, if I have not the Spirit of Christ I am nothing but noise"—I am not creating music that can be caught up and woven into the everlasting harmonies. The Corinthians, like certain moderns, put primary emphasis upon rhetoric and knowledge. Paul asserts, "Though I know all the mysteries and all knowledge and have not the Spirit of Christ I am nothing." There were some in Corinth, as there are some now, who talked much about faith. They had caught up the word of Jesus and were making a fetish of it. Paul declares, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not the Spirit of Christ I am nothing." There were Corinthians who made good works the be-all and end-all of religion, and their descendants have

gone abroad through all the earth. Their religion consisted in feeding poor people. Paul proclaims, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and have not the Spirit of Christ it profits me nothing." Philanthropy is not religion. It is possible to scatter large benefactions and have a heart at enmity with God. Even martyrdom does not always possess ethical value. Men can become martyrs through superstition or fanaticism, or through sheer stubbornness, and Paul lays it down, "Though I give my body to be burned and have not the Spirit of Christ it does not help me at all."

Here is a truth which the Apostle is determined to drive home. Everything, so he thinks, depends on this being understood. The future of the Church and of religion and of civilization itself all hangs on this. If men fail to see that being a Christian means possessing the Spirit of Christ, then all the future course of the world's life will be bound in shallows and miseries.

What is the Spirit of Christ? Fortunately we are not left in the dark. There is much twilight in the New Testament, but not at this point. Many things which we want to know about Jesus the New Testament refuses to disclose. One thing it makes gloriously luminous—the Spirit of Christ. His soul stands out before us radiant, full-statured, clear-cut as a star. We are uncertain sometimes as to His words; we are never in doubt concerning the sort of man He was. We are always absolutely

sure of His attitude, His disposition, His spirit. First of all, He was brotherly. His spirit was warmly fraternal. His heart was big and friendly. He was a brother to everybody. The crowd at once saw that. His brotherliness was amazing, unprecedented, even scandalous. He carried it too far, so thought the Scribes. He shocked the prudent by being too brotherly. He was the friend of publicans and sinners. That was the first indictment brought in against Him. To Jesus brotherliness is of the essence of true religion. Fellowship is cardinal and indispensable. In religion worship does not come first; brotherliness comes first. It is far easier to worship than to be brotherly. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way—first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." This is what He was always saying. His disciples could never forget it. One of them, when he was an old man, wrote: "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Brotherliness expresses itself in intercourse, communion, coöperation. The Christian who is zealous in worship and indifferent to fellowship does not know the A B C of Christianity. What foolery to make a great to-do about forms of worship and crucify the spirit of brotherliness! Church bigots and snobs, ecclesiastical autocrats

and churls have no part with Christ. Paul is right —“If a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Brotherliness is the first note of a genuinely Christian Church.

Brotherliness leads to service. Christ was a servant. No one questions that. He so glorified the word servant that His disciples could think of no higher title for themselves than “servants.” “He went about doing good.” That was Peter’s description of Jesus’ life when he held Jesus up before the Romans in the house of Cornelius in Cæsarea. Jesus loved to think of Himself as a servant. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” “If any man will be great, let him become the servant of all.” The man who rises highest is the man who serves most. At the end of His life Jesus, standing with a basin of water in one hand and a towel in the other, said: “I have given you an example.” The disciple who wrote the fourth Gospel has nothing to say about the Sacrament of the Bread and Wine; he fixes attention upon the Sacrament of the Basin and Towel. The Spirit of Christ is, then, the Spirit of service. A Christian man is always helpful. If he have not this spirit of helpfulness he does not belong to Christ. If a church is not a servant of the town, of the world, it is none of His. What matters it what you label it?

Brotherly service finds its climax in sacrifice. The Spirit of Jesus is the spirit of sacrifice. Does

any one doubt it? The fundamental principle of Christianity is self-denial. When Paul urges men to have the mind that was in Christ he portrays the self-surrender of the man Jesus, obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Jesus was always laying down His life for others. "If any man will come after me, let him take up his Cross every day." The Church is right in making the Cross the symbol of the Christian faith.

Here, then, we stand in the presence of the Soul of Jesus. He is brotherly, helpful, self-denying. His Spirit is the spirit of fraternity, service and loving sacrifice. If a man have not this same spirit he is none of His. If a church is not baptized into this same spirit it does not belong to Him. If you roll brotherliness, service and sacrifice into one word, you have love. The Spirit of Jesus is the spirit of love. "God is Love," and Jesus is the express image of His Father, and is therefore Love. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and also of the Son, and therefore the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love. The Kingdom of God is the sway of love. If the world is full of suspicion, and fear, and ill-will, the Kingdom of God has not come. If the Church abound in unbrotherliness and selfishness and dissension, the Kingdom of God has not come. All Christians are expected to pray constantly that the sway of love may come. It must come, first of all, to those who offer the prayer. The sway of love must be first in the

Church. If it is not there, it is not likely to be anywhere. It cannot be there until Christians repent and are born from above. Christ is inexorable on this point. "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you." Men are always willing to love up to a certain point, and after a conventional standard. We become real Christians only in loving our fellow Christians as Christ has loved us. This is His type of love which will save the Church and the world. No lower grade of love will meet the situation. The Publicans' style or the Gentiles' type are not sufficient. There must be the generous forgiving, overflowing, reckless love of Christ. We must forgive our enemies and do good to them that despitefully use us. It is this Christlike type of love in Christian men which is to convince the world that Jesus Christ is from heaven. Such love is the only badge of discipleship, the only satisfactory proof of loyalty. It is the only orthodoxy recognized in heaven. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another." A loveless Church is not a Christian Church. A Church which does not serve humanity does not belong to Christ. A divided Church is a stumbling block and scandal. A Church made up of groups of men who are unbrotherly, and who hold aloof from mutual service, and who refuse to coöperate in loving sacrifice for the attainment of common ends is a Church which is a disappoint-

ment to the heart of Christ. The nations will never be won by the observance of sacraments. The world can only be won by the massed cohorts of Christians who love one another as Christ has loved them. If the Church have not the Spirit of Christ it is none of His. Until that axiomatic truth is faced and accepted and incarnated we must remain outside the city whose gates are pearl.

“If a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Let us put a fresh emphasis on that. If he does not have the mind of Christ he is contributing nothing to that public opinion which will some day control the world. If he does not have the heart of Christ he does not count in the sum total of redemptive forces.

If the Church has not the Spirit of Christ it is none of His. Let us stress that. Jesus of Nazareth walked boldly across national, racial and social lines, and He said, “Follow Me.” Let us follow Him. It is the duty of the Church to walk unafraid across national frontiers. It is ordained to carry across national boundaries considerateness and helpfulness and forgiveness and sacrifice. It should do this audaciously. Men must learn to clasp hands across racial chasms. The Church must train them to do it. Men’s hearts must touch one another through the barriers of nationality and race and tradition and prejudice. The intertwining of human sympathies and affections, to this mighty work the Church is called. If the

Church have not the Spirit of Christ it is none of His.

If a nation have not the Spirit of Christ it is none of His. Let us say that with authority, and let us say it often. Diplomacy must be baptized into the Spirit of Christ. This must be insisted on. The diplomat must obey the law of Christ. He must be brotherly. His ambition must be to help, and he must do his work within sight of the principle of sacrifice. The mailed fist must go—only the pierced hands can lift the world to new levels. Love is the mightiest force in the universe. Let us believe it and act upon it. Scientists are not ashamed of the law of gravitation. It is inexorable, unchangeable, and those who ignore it perish. Let us not apologize for the law of love. It also is unalterable, inflexible, and those who violate it are ground to powder. The world is in its present deplorable condition solely because of the long continued and outrageous trampling upon the law of love.

If a government have not the Spirit of Christ it is none of His. If it lack His Spirit it is doomed. Its wealth will not save it, nor its learning, nor its genius, nor its military power. If a nation have not the Spirit of Christ it must go down. Let us press this upon the mind and conscience of the world. Let us put it in the forefront of all our teaching. God has made of one flesh every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having

determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitations. Corporate life is ordained of God, and ruled by Him. National development is held in the grip of unchanging and irresistible law. God is love, and rulers and statesmen lead nations to the abyss if they refuse to obey the law of love. Nations, like individuals, live and move and have their being in God (*i. e.*, in love). No nation lives to itself. Every nation is vitally related to every other nation, and all nations are bound up in the life of the Lord of Love. A nation which refuses to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with its neighbours in the path of brotherly service and good will is sooner or later dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. Those who doubt this should read history.

It is in the international realm that the Church must, through the coming centuries, perform its most zealous and arduous labour. The world is sick and the Church must heal it. The world is torn by evil spirits, suspicion and fear, and greed, and injustice, and hate, and revenge, and all these must be cast out. The Church is commissioned to cast out demons. War is a demon. War must go. We must have a warless world if we are to have any world at all. Let us demand in the name of Christ that preparations for war throughout shall cease. Preparing for war leads to war. We can never have peace so long as nations prepare for war. Let us insist that target practice shall come

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to an end. Let us denounce it as blasphemy against God, a conscienceless trampling on our word to the young men who went out to die in the Great War, heartened by our promise that that would be the last war. Let us cry out unitedly against the building of battle-ships, those breeders of fear, and against the construction of bomb-dropping airplanes, those fomenters of hate, and against the creation of all those instruments of death whose very existence arouses suspicion and poisons the springs of international good will.

God calls all men to repent. To repent is not to cry or to feel bad. We have cried enough. To repent is to change one's mind. God commands us to change our ways of thinking. We think like men, and the world can never become better or happier until we think like God. We think like God only when we think like Christ. When we think like Christ we think in terms of justice and mercy, of tenderness and forgiveness and good will. When we think like Christ we believe in men. We trust them, we suffer long and still are kind. We are patient with them, and we forgive them when they do us wrong. We claim them as our brothers.

To bring the separated races together and to train alienated nations to love one another—this is our heavenly Father's business and we must be about it. There are many obstacles. We must travel the way of the Cross. The adversaries are

not few. We must go by way of Golgotha. The discouragements and disappointments and defeats and delays make the heart sick—this is the cup which our Father has given us to drink. Shall we not drink it? If God is for us, who is against us? “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things.” “If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”

Let us open our Conference with a great wish, a mighty longing, a passionate prayer that the Spirit of Love may come upon us and direct us in all our ways. Then shall we have the Spirit of Christ and the Conference will be His.

X

THE CROSS—THE MEASURE
OF THE WORLD

By

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John Kelman was born June 20, 1862, in Ayrshire, Scotland. He received his academic training at New College, Edinburgh and Ormond College, Melbourne; ordained as a Presbyterian clergyman 1891; assistant to Rev. (now Principal) George Adam Smith, D. D., LL. D., in Aberdeen; minister of Peterculter, Aberdeenshire, 1891; of New North Church, Edinburgh, 1897-1907; of St. George's United Free Church, Edinburgh, 1907-1919; now minister of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City. Dr. Kelman is a ripe scholar, an illuminating author and a master of pulpit technique.

Outstanding among his publications are: *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, *The Holy Land*, *A Study of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, *Among Famous Books*, *The Light That Saves*, and *The Foundations of Faith*.

X

THE CROSS—THE MEASURE OF THE WORLD

"He that talketh with me has a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof."—REVELATION 21:15.

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."—I CORINTHIANS 1:23, 24.

I

THERE is a fine phrase of Newman's in which he speaks of the cross as the measure of the world. There is no one text of Scripture which gives these words exactly, but if we combine the two texts which have been chosen for to-day we shall get something very near it. It is a phrase very rich and full of spiritual suggestion. It shows us on the one hand one of the deepest of the world's needs, and on the other hand the remedy for that defect. The need of the world is for a true standard whereby it may judge itself and its beliefs. Many hard things have been said about the world, in condemnation both of its wisdom and of its morality, but this is the most fundamental of them all. If it be true

that the world habitually deludes itself because of the false standards by which it judges, then the case is indeed serious. In Second Corinthians St. Paul speaks of some who measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves, and by doing this prove that they are not wise. Theirs was the same folly which Pope rebukes in his famous line, *Still make themselves the measure of mankind*. This is a very far-reaching accusation. It does not mean merely that the world is mistaken in its judgments, and accuse it of falsity or foolishness in this or that estimate. It goes much further than that and tells us that the world cannot but be mistaken in its judgment, because it has lost its sense of values and proportions altogether. Its greatest need is not for a correct view of this or that, but for a new standard by which to judge all things.

Here then the new standard is offered to the world. It is the cross of Calvary. Of the many points of view from which men have seen the cross none could possibly be more interesting and none more vital than this. It has been given to man as a measuring-rod, an absolute standard of value to which he may bring all the aspects and details of his manifold life, and determine the worth of each, not for time but for eternity. This is an idea which has been often and beautifully expressed. Readers of Cynewulf's great poem of Christ will remember how on Judgment Day the

cross dominates the whole scene with its mingled streams of fire and blood. Equally dominant is the cross in Dante's *Paradiso* in which everything is subordinate to its supreme decision. The idea of the cross as standard has become domesticated in our Gothic architecture. All over Christian lands our fathers erected cruciform churches and cathedrals, symbolizing the dying Saviour point by point. In many of these the leaning chancel has indicated the head of the Crucified, and the altar-rail has been familiarly spoken of as the breast of God, while the transepts are the outstretched arms. These churches were the Christian attempt to re-measure the world with the measure of Christ, the Crucified, and so correct the mistaken judgments of things that men were everywhere making.

If we may pursue the figure a little further we can well see how in the day of Calvary the cross of Jesus was measuring the city of Jerusalem. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah who lifted up his eyes and looked, and beheld a man with a measuring-line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. Undoubtedly in Christ's time Jerusalem was needing a new standard of measurement. Its history had intoxicated it. It had taken itself so seriously that it seemed to be the greatest city, nay the only city worth mentioning, in all the world. After so long

a lapse of time the airs which Jerusalem gave herself would be amusing if they were not so pathetic. She complacently asked whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth, and evidently was persuaded that there was nothing which counted for anything, and no one who counted for anybody outside of Jerusalem.

How sarcastically history has dealt with that judgment. The city shrank long ago to a provincial town famous chiefly for a crime. A score of times besieged, its character seemed to grow worse rather than to improve under calamity. They used to ask whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth, but the question seemed to retort upon them, asking whether any good thing could come out of Jerusalem, and the answer was that it was very doubtful whether any good thing could come out of Jerusalem—alive. Even in temporal matters the cross measured Jerusalem. It was the token of the city's subjection under the power of Rome. It measured its religion, showing how narrow were its projects and how unreasoning its hatreds. It branded it with the perpetual accusation that with all its boasted austerity of righteousness Jerusalem was a place where men could still be crucified to save a situation. Thus Jesus from the cross judged His judges, Roman and Jewish alike. When, near the end, He cried, *It is finished*, the words were His verdict upon a great deal that had been characteristic of the ancient world. Much

that seemed important, much that had been taken for granted, much that was universal and had been esteemed excellent, was indeed finished upon that day. The ways and standards which had satisfied the earlier conscience would satisfy man no more. Old things were passed away and many of them thrown upon the rubbish-heap forever. The old Jerusalem had outlived her day. A new world, managed upon different principles and measured by different standards, began at the cross. The triumph of these principles and standards would be a new Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven to take the place of the old.

It is perhaps fanciful, and yet the fancy is quite irresistible and there is much truth in it, to see in the cross a rod that measures human life in four directions—east and west and down and up. It measured the East and all that Oriental life had stood for. Especially did it take the measure of Judea and Palestine. The Holy Land in its supercilious fashion imagined that it had taken the measure of the cross. Paul tells us that it had called it a stumbling-block and passed on its way regardless. For the pious Jew this symbol was simply a gallows on which a blasphemer had been punished by the hands of his appointed judges. How little could he imagine that this execution was really taking the measure of him and of his nation and sending it down to all future time. It was not long till the apostles of the new creed were proclaiming that

Palestine was a nation which had crucified its Messiah, and the cross was already branding them in history as the murderers of the Holy One of God. In countless touches we see the judgment of the cross upon those who were responsible for it. As they passed by while Christ was dying, they called up to Him in mockery, Come down from the cross and we will believe. He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Nothing could have been more revealing than that. It measured their estimate of what God and the Son of God must be. The Crucified would have seemed divine to them if He had saved Himself. But the cross has taught the world that He Who saves Himself cannot save others, and the world has believed in Christ precisely because He did not come down from the cross.

Not less accurately and sweepingly did the cross take the measure of the Western world that day. The West was dominated by the Greek spirit which counted the cross foolishness. Their measure of it was contemptuous in the last degree, and it would have seemed sheer folly to offer it to them in their culture. Cicero had said, Let the very name of the cross be far away from Roman citizens, not from their bodies only—but from their thoughts, their eyes and their ears. The weakness of the Greek world was that it refused to face the facts of life. Nature was crucifying Greece in national disaster and in the sad and insoluble mystery of

death, to say nothing of all the individual pain and wretchedness with which life itself was beset. The Greek was perplexed, and there hung about all his fair dreams that melancholy with which we are familiar. The cross might indeed be foolishness to the Greek, but in the deep heart of him he knew it was fact also, and he had no explanation for the mystery. The cross of Calvary has measured and explained the tragedy which perplexed and saddened the Græco-Roman world and which are still so insistent in the heart of man. It revealed a sorrow that was not unavailing, a sacrifice that could redeem, and thus it answered the questions which classical culture could not answer, and took the measure of that culture's highest wisdom.

Behold how far also the east is from the west! How very far is Athens from Jerusalem! Yet He Who was crucified on Calvary stretched out His hands toward both of these. He revealed and put on record the inevitable failure of their life and showed that He alone could rectify it. As He hung there in mute agony He was interpreting the deepest meaning both of Eastern and of Western thought. Beyond the bounds of the Græco-Latin world on the one side and the Semitic on the other, the cross was the measure of still further lands. All other faiths with their acceptances and rejections must sooner or later come to this measuring-place and have their values tested by the cross of Calvary. The faith of which that cross is the

symbol is not a new faith better than others that had already existed or were yet to be born. It is the very essence of all true religion, the thing which every faith of man is seeking and more or less vainly trying to express.

Further; the cross is the measure not only of man's religion but of all departments of his life and thought. It tears off all our wrappings of local prejudice and brings us down in every region to the dire facts of human life. It measures our politics and all our national ideals. These have been too often measured by such poor conceptions as the balance of power and the most convenient compromise which will tide a nation over the immediate future. But the cross strikes home to the principles upon which politicians are working. It knows nothing of questions of expediency, but reveals these principles as essentially Christian or anti-Christian, good or bad. Similarly, it measures our wealth and poverty, and the causes which produce them. Social prejudice and the habit of *laissez faire* have pronounced their own judgment upon this distribution and found that it was all very satisfactory. That is not the judgment of the cross. The cross demands a justice founded upon equity rather than upon the mere letter of the law. It insists upon humanity instead of legality as the master of the social conscience.

Similarly, the cross measures the art of any age, not by the fashion of critics and the popular fancy

of the time, but by its relation to truth and loftiness and purity, in virtue of which art is the handmaid of the Lord. It measures our science by its fearlessness in the search for truth. It sets for the model of the scientific man that Christ Who died rather than retract, and Who incurred enormous risks of misunderstanding rather than suppress the word He had to proclaim. It justifies investigation and convinces the world that in the long run it is always safe to know and to declare the facts of the case. With equal remorselessness it measures our ambitions and all our dreams of greatness, our pleasures and frivolities and slights. These are always popular and are understood and accepted as the normal way for the world to live. But the cross forces sacrifice into the heart of life. It condemns selfishness, the oldest idol in the world. It reveals God's method of dying in sacrifice and being raised again in power, not merely as an ancient dogma concerning His Son in Jerusalem, but as the process through which individual lives and the history of the race must move forward through the ages. It sets man over against the world and proclaims his infinite value asking in its silent eloquence, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Thus it exalts men and makes them know the superiority of their human value to all earthly gains. No such claim for the rights of man was ever made on the earth before. He has a right not only to the

perishing gains of a day and to equal chances in its business, but to righteousness and honour and love, things which will outlast all earthly success or failure.

The cross stretches its grim measuring-line downwards, searching the deep places of life's tragedy and man's misery. It measures the world's pain with an intimate and understanding measurement, and it offers the only solution for the mystery of suffering which has ever satisfied the human soul. In all generations bruised and thwarted spirits have rebelled against the injustice of life, and have taken their sufferings as a humiliation. The cross proclaims suffering to be a redeeming thing, and as the centuries go by we are understanding better and better the truth of that great pronouncement. Take the instance of the recent war. It is the fashion now to deplore the lack of noble consequence such as was prophesied from it. Yet in the hour of decision the question was forced upon millions of young men, as it had never been before, Which is the nobler destiny for man, selfish ease and imperial tyranny, or bloody trenches and the steadfast purpose of liberty at the cost of death? Thus to the end of time will the cross of Christ exalt and glorify suffering undertaken for all honourable causes. It will whisper to the pain and agony of man a message of eternal hope.

Deeper still searches the cross into the human tragedy, measuring the sin and folly of the ages.

Sin has been esteemed a light thing. Men have been ingenious in discovering excuses for it, and in practicing easy luxurious ways of repentance which might silence the voice of conscience. The music of the Venusberg has always been trying to drown the Pilgrim's March. There is no task which has more constantly exercised mankind than the attempt to break down the difference between right and wrong and to persuade the world that there is no real difference. All such moral confusion has been answered by the late Dr. Denney in the one sentence that Christ died for the difference between right and wrong. His cross is still the measure of the world's power to resist love, and that is the very essence of sin in all sorts. To every age, beset by moral scepticism, which would tell the young generation that there is no real difference between right and wrong, Christ gives the conclusive answer. This is what sin meant to Jesus—this agony of spirit, this unspeakable shame, this death that followed when the sin of the world came upon His soul. No man, however wise or learned he may be, can really construct a moral philosophy that is worthy of the name until he has measured all the problems of good and evil at the cross of Christ.

There is yet another direction toward which the cross points: it points upward toward heaven and is the measure of the world in that direction also. Beyond the head bowed in anguish the long

straight line of the cross pointed toward the darkened skies, and pierced through them to the light beyond. It measures not only the misery of human life with its pain and sin, but also the power of God to deal with it at its worst. It has given to the world its only true optimism. There is an optimism which is a mere dislike to look at the painful side of things, and the construction of a beautiful world by the simple expedient of shutting the eyes to the world as it is. That kind of optimism had long ago proved a delusion which only deepened man's distrust in life. Amid the wreckage of such vain hopes the tall cross of Calvary stands. When we look upon it we are persuaded that there is here the one power in the universe able to look with open eyes upon the worst, and still believe in the best. In the cross love has proved absolutely able to cope with the very worst that hell can do. It reveals to us the enormous stretch of the love and power of God. We do not seek to balance one of His attributes against another, and read into the cross a compromise between justice and mercy. We find in it the assurance that He Himself is adequate to deal with all that there is or ever can be, able to save to the uttermost. Thus the cross is the measure of God's ability to deal with life, a proposition which includes three great and final thoughts.

First of all, it shows a new conception of love.

Love has too often been looked upon as a mere gratification, which in many cases is neither more nor less than the highest degree of selfishness. In its new meaning love proves to be essentially a gift. Bearing the cross in mind one asks, not how can I get out of fellowship with this other, but how much can I give, contributing to the other's need. Love is not a matter of pleasure only, but also the very essence of life and duty. It is not a sweet and voluptuous decoration, but the very structure of the house of life. Here then in the cross we see all that love can do. In this tremendous exhibition God loves man to the uttermost, and in so loving him He has set the one authentic standard for all our lesser human loves.

In the second place, the cross has established a measure for God's trust in man. He committed Christ unreservedly to humanity and they betrayed the trust. Yet that trust was given in certain knowledge that mankind would rebound from its betrayal, and come back in tears and shame to the foot of the very cross it had erected on which to slay Christ; and when men come back in penitence to God they receive the last and highest exhibition of trust that is possible even to the Divine, the trust of forgiveness. In Christ's day many sinners heard from His lips the words, Go and sin no more, and they must have been astonished at the amazing confidence which these words expressed with so little apparent reason.

But the forgiveness and trust of Christ were very wise, and His cross has brought them down the ages. Sinners still find their forgiveness and redemption in Him, and are amazed as they realize how freely and fully He is trusting them. To the end of time the cross will be the measure of God's trust in sinful man.

Finally, the cross is the measure of hope. The age-long battle between optimism and pessimism swings to and fro continually. There is one thing that can settle it finally on the side of hope, and that is that once and for all in the cross of Calvary love proved mightier than all its enemies. The problem of Providence is perpetually baffling us as it meets us in our own experience. We cannot but feel that it is not only mysterious but sometimes apparently unreasonable that we should be left to the conscienceless play of natural laws and so completely at their mercy. It is in the cross that we find that higher wisdom and that individual affection which we miss so terribly in Providence. Here we see God bearing the tragedy of the universe and yet remaining calm amidst it all, because of that secret of redemption which He knows and in which He asks mortals also to confide.

Thus the cross of Jesus searches and measures the world, its religions and its wickednesses, its appearances and its realities alike: its power to bring out and to exhibit the worst that there is in

human nature, and its power also to bring out the best. After the measurement is done and we come to examine the record of it, we see love revealed as the absolute master of the universe, and all that is the enemy of love cast into eternal contempt.

XI

LIFE AFTER DEATH

By

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Joseph Fort Newton was born at Decatur, Texas, July 21, 1876. He was a student at Hardy Institute and received his theological training at the Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Ky. Dr. Newton was ordained a Baptist minister in 1893; pastor First Baptist Church, Paris, Texas, 1897-1898; founder and pastor People's Church, Dixon, Ill., 1901-1908; pastor Liberal Christian Church, Cedar Rapids, Ia., 1908-1916. From the latter church, Dr. Newton was called to the pulpit of the historic City Temple, London, where he remained for several years. He is at present pastor of the Church of the Divine Paternity, New York. Dr. Newton is a literary artist, and a man of wide sympathies and outlook.

Among his many volumes of published sermons and addresses we would mention: *The Religious Basis of a Better World Order*, *The Eternal Christ*, *The Ambassador*, *The Mercy of Hell* and his illuminating diary, *Preaching in London*.

XI

LIFE AFTER DEATH

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him."—LUKE 24: 30, 31.

LOVERS of letters will recall the poem entitled *Conversation*, by Cowper, where, after making excellent fun of various kinds of tedious talkers, he stops suddenly—as if he had seen a vision. With arresting abruptness he thinks of that never-to-be-forgotten conversation in the gloaming of the day on the way to Emmaus. He tells what "happened on a solemn even-tide," how "ere yet they brought their journey to an end, a Stranger joined them, courteous as a Friend," gathering up the thread of their despairing talk, with "truth and wisdom gracing all he said." In one of his letters the poet refers to the incident: "I have been intimate with a man of fine taste who has confessed to me that, though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, he thought that if the stamp of Divinity was anywhere to be found in the Scriptures, it was vividly impressed upon that passage of St. Luke."

It is indeed true. For my part, no other scene

in the Book of Faith, whose leaves are for the healing of human hearts, is so perfect an example of that naturalization of the Unseen, which is the goal of religious insight and experience. There is about this narrative an air of reality which sets it apart from other such records. It has a restraint, a dignity, a delicacy, and withal an ineffable beauty, which give it every mark of authenticity. Moreover, its vivid human colour and its awful yet tender disclosure blend as naturally as earth and sky on the horizon. No imagined account known to me gives anything like the same impression of validity in beauty. Here are the three things that make our life worth while: the Divine companion, the sufficient interpretation, and the triumph of spiritual personality. Jesus was known to His friends, not by His profound exposition of prophecy, but by a familiar little gesture—all His own—in the breaking of bread. Of all pages of the Bible, none is more exquisitely satisfying, none more luminously revealing of what we really need to know.

By the same token, it is in the atmosphere of that sacramental even-tide—with its glowing heart of fellowship, and its gentle unveilings—that we ought to discuss the questions that rise out of the Easter anthem. The last entry in the Journal of Sir Walter Scott was as follows: "We slept reasonably, but on the next morning——" The sentence was never finished. Death cut it short,

Only Sir Walter himself knew what came to him on the next morning. But once we know that life is one, here, hereafter, and forever, unbroken, uninterrupted, and that, had Sir Walter made himself known to his friends, they would have known him there, as they knew him here, by some little characteristic of gesture or turn of mind, the mystery becomes plainer and the wonder more intelligible. Once we are assured of life after death—not another life, but life further on—it is the natural and eager inquiry of humanity to know what happens on “the next morning.” It is not enough to know that we will continue to exist; we desire to know how, when, where?

There is a famous story of an officer in the British army in India, who, when discussing these matters with his friends, remarked that some day he expected to know in five minutes more than all the philosophers had ever learned. When asked what he meant, he said: “The first five minutes after death!” What does the soul discover in that moment of emancipation? Such a question is in all our hearts when we think of our own passing, or follow in faith and imagination the flight of those who vanish from us. Jesus did not answer the question. He revealed the triumph of personality, but He left the details hidden by a discreet and wise silence, in order, no doubt, not to interfere with the life that now is. It was enough, He thought, to make the life beyond real,

homelike, and near, confirming faith without satisfying mere curiosity, and even we can see that it is better so. In a world where there is good to do, truth to win, and "beauty passes with the sun on her wings," the question of the angel of the Ascension is valid: "Why stand ye gazing into heaven?"

As we knew nothing of life here before entering it, and could not have imagined its conditions, so we cannot picture the details of life further on, which must be different from the physical limitations which beset us here. All attempts to do so are futile and unsatisfactory, when, indeed, they are not grotesque and irritating. They are for the most part projections into the future of desires unfulfilled on earth, finding there what is missed here. For John on Patmos, sundered from his friends by the imprisoning sea, "There shall be no more sea"; for Robert Hall, in a long agony of pain, heaven is health; for Wilberforce, hindered in his labour of love, it is unthwarted affection. The Paradiso of Dante, with its throne approached through circles of blinding light, is as unattractive as the military heaven of Milton, with its shock of armies and its tramping legions. Sir Conan Doyle and his fellow-seekers have helped to humanize the after life in our thought, but the picture is spoiled when they try to fill out the details. The grand dream of Swedenborg is nobler and more worthy, but it leaves much to be de-

sired—albeit surpassing all other such portrayals alike in moral insight and spiritual reality. Since all efforts to picture the future in detail are unsatisfactory, the sum of wisdom, no less than of faith, lies in the confidence that the God who made us and led us to what we are will lead us to what we ought to be.

Must we then admit that we know nothing at all about the life after death, and are doomed to live in a world of dim hints and cryptic analogies, with no glad, triumphant assurance? Far, very far from it! Indeed the whole point of my sermon is to show that we know much—very much—about life after death, both as to its reality and its conditions—all, in fact, that we really need to know—and if we are wise enough to lay the facts to heart, we shall find consolation for to-day and inspiration for the morrow. Jesus lifted our immortal faith in immortality into the light, showing us that the Eternal Life is here, not a life into which we enter at death, but a present reality, at once a possession and prophecy. His religion, as Harnack said, is nothing else than the eternal life lived in time, in the spirit of love and by the grace of God. Emerson was right when he refused to discuss mere survival, saying that Jesus, who lived in the realm of moral realities, heedless of sensual fortunes, never made the separation of the idea of duration from the essence of the spiritual attributes of man, “nor uttered a syllable concerning the duration of

the soul." No, it was left for His disciples to sever duration from the moral elements and to teach the immortality of the soul as a doctrine, and maintain it by evidences. "The moment the doctrine is separately taught, man is already fallen. In the flowing of love, in the adoration of humility, there is no question of continuance." Only in a spiritual universe is the question of immortality pertinent, and in such a universe life is measured not by quantity but by quality, not by duration but by depth. The Eternal Life, then, is all of a piece, one here, hereafter, and forever, its conditions everywhere the same, its experience a perpetual revelation—pray, what more do we really want or need to know?

Let us be more specific, in the effort to make this matter plain, as a help both to our thinking and to our living. What we have to remember is that all the realities that make life great, deep and rewarding, abide hereafter untouched by time or death. They are at once realities and prophecies which, if we consider them deeply, are like luminous streamers thrown forward by an enormous search-light, and if they do not reveal all, they do illumine the pathways of the future, just as they sustain, fortify, and guide us here below. First of all, God lives here, hereafter, and unto everlasting, and in Him there is no death, no darkness, no distance. Without God immortality would be the ultimate horror of desolation, not a destiny but a

doom. With Him, it is a lengthening vista of hope and joy. "In him we live and move and have our being," said the Apostle, and that will be as true after death as it is here. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations, from everlasting to everlasting," said the Psalmist; and death does not so much as cast a shadow upon that elemental fact. As for man, his days may be as the grass that withers, as a tale that is told, as a vapour that melts, but God lives, and we live in Him!

Second, we live in a living, vibrant, prophetic universe in which Life is the vivid, radiant, all-conquering reality. Life, with its vigour, its movement, its colour, its power, is the one overflowing, overwhelming fact. Even matter, if we analyze it, dissolves into energy, activity, power. Dead inert matter, as we now know, simply does not exist. Third, life does not even stand still, much less die. Growth, movement, progress; that is its law. The one stupendous fact, revealed in all the universe, so far as we can read its laws, is an irresistible, pauseless advance. From the amoeba to man, from the savage to the saint, it is ever an ascending march, in which life is better, finer, nobler, farther on, disclosing higher forms. Here our outlook differs radically from the outlook of the ancient world, when men thought of life after death as a pale, thin shadow of the life that now is. With us it is different. Our clearer

vision is of life bursting through limitations into new fields, unfolding new potentialities, making to-day better than yesterday and prophesying a better to-morrow. In accordance with this universal law of progress, life after death will be an advance, a step forward, an adventure into new lands, new visions, new and unimagined discoveries!

Fourth, add now the fact of a universal moral order, sovereign everywhere, and it begins to be clear that we know a great deal about the life after death. It moves under the same moral jurisdiction, in obedience to the same law of righteousness and retribution. Neither in life nor in death can we escape the moral law. Its empire is eternal. If we take the wings of morning and fly to the uttermost end of the sky, lo it is there. If we sink to the lowest depth, behold it is there. There is no redemption, here or anywhere, until we learn to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. The idea that death is moral doom—fixing fate, either for salvation or damnation—is an absurdity, in violation of the simplest laws of the moral life. Death does not make a man a saint. It does not petrify him in sin. It does not touch the moral life at all, save as it may strip us of sensuality and set us free from handicaps which beset us here. The awakening after death may be bewildering, but the moral continuity of life is unbroken. Life after death begins where it leaves

off here, without interruption. "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise"—that is, a garden—said Jesus to the man who died with Him. To-day, before the sun goes down! There, as here, God lives, the moral law rules, and salvation is in the fellowship of love and righteousness.

Fifth, the laws of the spiritual life are not clouded, much less abrogated, by the ordeal of physical death. What are those laws? The life of love, the knowledge of the truth, and the doing of good! Whatever else may pass away, love remains, and love never faileth, for God is love. It is His nature, His spirit, His life, inexhaustible, indestructible, all-conquering—a love to which we may trust our souls, and the destiny of those we love. Love in ourselves is the revelation of God, and its predictions cannot fail of fulfillment. If all is law, all is love too, as Browning said, and this law of love is the life of God, as it is the hope and destiny of humanity. If we are to know the truth, as Bergson said, it must be "after the fashion of one who loves." How little we know, and how much we long to know! How the heart beats high when we hear the words of Kepler, as he looked through his glass into the heavens: "O Almighty God! I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" Eternity will be needed, and endless development, if we are to follow the long flight of the thoughts of God. What joy of revelation awaits the mind that seeks the freedom of the truth, of which we

read only here a line and there a stanza in the dim twilight of this world. The words of Newton rise from prayer to praise: "Glory to God who has permitted me to catch a glimpse of the skirts of His garments! My calculations have encountered the march of the stars!" Even in this tangled life there is no joy like the Doing of Good! Jesus made it His business, and He had no other occupation. Love, Truth, and the Doing of Good—to be partners with God in His moral enterprise, fellow-workers in the redemptive making of humanity—what more do we ask to know of life after death?

"Old Past, let go and drop in the sea!
Till fathomless waters cover thee!
For I am living but thou art dead,
Thou drawest back, I strive ahead
The Day to find."

Toward the end of his life Dostoevsky divided the race into two classes, those who know the eternal life and those who do not, and he thought the fate of civilization will rest with those who are citizens of eternity. It is indeed true. Materialism is disintegrating anarchy. Pessimism is poison. Cynicism and scepticism are forms of death. All the dear interests and institutions of humanity have their basis in the eternal life, else they cannot abide. It would be easy to delude ourselves and suppose that society is held together by outward forms, but these no more cement it

than the tortoise in the old fable upheld the earth. Our human world is kept in place and urged along its orbit by unseen forces. Thence come those impulses to progress, those insights and aspirations, which impel man to vaster issues; they are the pressure upon him of the endless life. Men have tried to found empires upon slavery, upon brute force, upon cunning and cruelty, and they have failed. Liberty, justice, love, truth are things of the eternal life, without which customs are cobwebs and laws are ropes of sand. The power of an endless life is thus the creative and constructive force of social life; and he renders the highest service to society who makes the eternal vivid to men—makes it something more than a visionary scene suspended in the sky.

What is true of social life is equally true in the making of character and personality—the two loveliest flowers grown in these short days of sun and frost. Only recently a great physician said that subconscious health cannot be obtained in one who has lost faith in immortality. Without it the noblest powers of the soul are inhibited, the divinest instincts are frustrated, having no happy release and no promise of fulfillment. They are driven inward, and make a restless ache in the heart, an anxiety which nothing can heal. When we know the Eternal life, all doors are open and the great aspirations of the heart take wings. The impingement of eternity upon man gives to the moral sense

an august authority, and makes religion not a dogma, but the life of God in the soul of man. Life everywhere grows in dignity, meaning and worth when it is lived in the fellowship of eternal things. Under the expansive pressure of eternal values we become aware of what life is, what it means, and what it prophesies, eager only to do the will of God, whether to-morrow find us toiling here, or out yonder with the dwellers of the City on the Hill.

XII

RECIPROCAL FAITH

By

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Frederick W. Norwood, the present minister of City Temple, London, was born in Australia. At the outbreak of the World War he went to France as a chaplain where he became exceedingly popular among the soldiers. In 1919, Mr. Norwood succeeded Dr. Joseph Fort Newton as pastor of the London City Temple. His rise in pulpit fame has been meteoric, but his reputation has been made and will remain secure. During the summer of 1922 he exchanged pulpits with Dr. Charles E. Jefferson of the Broadway Tabernacle Church, New York, as an ambassador of Anglo-American friendship.

He was granted the degree of Doctor of Divinity, by Ursinus College, during his American visit. Dr. Norwood's sermons are intensely human and vital; his pulpit manners are exceedingly simple and unconventional. He is author of a volume of really great sermons entitled: *The Cross in the Garden*.

XII

RECIPROCAL FAITH

"Many believed in his name . . . but Jesus did not commit himself unto them."—JOHN 2:23, 24.

BUT Jesus." That disjunctive is dislocating, startling, arresting! We had thought that He wanted people to believe in Him; we had been told that the reason He did these signs was that they might believe in Him. Why then, when they did believe in Him, did He fail to respond? Have they not said in our ears until we were weary of hearing, "Only believe"? But there seems to have been a difficulty upon His side; they believed, but He did not respond. "But Jesus!" The disjunctive arrests the reverent mind, sets it thinking, probing back even to the original tongue itself, and then we discover that the same word in the Greek is rendered differently in our English translation. The same word that means "belief" is also translated "commit."

"Many believed in him . . . but Jesus did not commit himself unto them."

Our translators, in seeking to find a word which would make the meaning clear to English ears, have probably to some extent obscured the sense. They might have got nearer to the mark if they had said,

“Many believed in Him, but Jesus did not believe in them.”

Belief then is a reciprocal thing after all. It takes two to make a Christian—myself and Jesus. If I believe in Him, and He does not believe in me, am I a Christian? How futile it has been for us to put all the emphasis upon our side of believing. Belief is a reciprocal thing. We have overemphasized the value of the creed, yet nothing has been more often demonstrated than the fact that correctness in creed is not necessarily the same thing as correctness in spirit. One would trust a Christian with one's life, but one would not necessarily trust the merely orthodox. The creed is our side of faith, but there is another side, and faith is not consummated until the two meet. That is a fact of human experience.

Christopher Columbus was not the only man who believed that the world was round; there were other men who believed that, but the round world did not commit itself to them. It did to Columbus; it laid hold of him, took him by the hand, led him down to the sea, where he sat for long hours on the shore, considering the bits of driftwood that came from the unknown; presently it led him on board a little ship, so that he sailed away over the wide sea, till at last the round world whispered to him, “See, you believed in me, I have committed myself to you, I have told you my secret; go back and tell the world what you have learned.”

Belief is not consummated until that in which you believe trusts you and commits itself to you. For true belief is mutual belief and is also a mutual committal.

All men believe in peace, but if peace were a personal spirit, would she commit herself to all men?

All men believe in the League of Nations, or at least a great many men, but could the spirit of the League of Nations commit herself to all men?

All men believe in honesty, up to a point at any rate; they like to be so dealt with, they see quite clearly that social, industrial and commercial life are not possible without it, but could the spirit of honesty commit herself to all men?

All men believe in purity, there are some lives whose purity they would guard with their own, but could the spirit of purity commit herself to them?

They only are honest whom honesty herself would trust; they only are pure whom purity would trust. There are two sides to every effort of faith.

After all, what I believe depends upon a good many things. It depends to a great extent upon the way in which I have been brought up. It depends also upon the cleanness with which certain things have been explained, upon the nature of the experiences through which I have passed in life, and also upon my own reaction to those factors, so that what I believe depends not upon myself alone.

It is not impossible that there are some folk who have been brought up in a wrong way, to whom things have never been explained, whose experiences have been very adverse, and yet Jesus might believe in them, though they did not believe in Him.

In that great parable, which He told, of the end of all things, the parable of the sheep and the goats, as we call it, you remember He represented Himself as saying, "Blessed are ye," and some of those to whom He spoke said, "Lord, when saw we thee?" They did not know Him, they had never met Him, but He said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me." They did not believe in Him, but He believed in them. I venture to think that there are many people in this world who do not believe in Jesus, who never heard His name, who have not had the possibility of believing, but He may believe in them; and if one has to separate the two, surely that is the greater thing after all.

As we study the life of the Master, in His dealings with men, does it not seem to you that the chief factor in their salvation was not so much their belief in Him as His belief in them?

"Simon," said He, the first day that Peter came to Him, "thou shalt be called a rock." Simon Peter was anything but a rock, the days came again and again when that element of instability in his character allowed him to be swept off his feet and threatened to engulf him, but I can imagine Peter

pulling himself up and saying, "He said I was a rock," and a rock he became at last.

Thomas was not very successful as a believer; he was not built that way; he could not help himself; he had to ask questions, and often enough he found his problems insoluble. But Jesus believed in Thomas, and one day revealed Himself in a special manner to him. Jesus knew what we discover as we study the life of Thomas, that perplexed as he was mentally, he was very loyal personally. It was Thomas who said, when they tried in vain to restrain Jesus from going down amongst the Jews for fear He might be stoned, "Let us go with him, that we may die with him." Thomas was not very clear in his theological beliefs, but he was very loyal in his personal trust, and Jesus believed in Thomas.

Jesus believed in Zaccheus; I do not know why, —I cannot find anything about Zaccheus that makes me disposed to believe in him, except that Jesus did. He was chief of the publicans, and the publicans were a bad lot, but Jesus believed in Zaccheus, and Zaccheus came down from his tree into the midst of the hostile crowd and said:

"Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught from any man, I restore fourfold."

Jesus believed in Zaccheus, and Zaccheus accordingly believed in both Jesus and himself.

Jesus believed in Mary Magdalene; I do not

know why. There is not much in her life to inspire confidence, but Jesus believed in her, and Mary Magdalene became pure and beautiful because of His belief.

Jesus believed in the woman of Samaria; I can hardly tell why. To me she seems ignorant, vulgar, curious, as well as immoral, but He believed in her, and the woman responded to His belief and became a naive evangelist.

It was the same in His pictorial teaching. Jesus believed in the publican in the Temple; whether he was a real character or not I do not know, but he was typical. Jesus believed in the publican who only smote his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." He did not seem to believe overmuch in the Pharisee, though the odds are all in his favour. He had performed all his religious duties, he fasted twice in the week, he gave alms; there appears to be little wrong in the Pharisee, but Jesus did not believe in him much. He did believe in the publican, and somehow our hearts go out to the publican and not to the Pharisee.

Jesus believed in the younger brother in that parable of the Prodigal Son; I do not know why; there does not seem much indication that he was worth believing in. Thoughtless, selfish, grasping, riotous, careless. I have seen lots of prodigals like that; God knows they are pitiful people; they have such a way of drifting back again to the hog-troughs. One would find it easier to believe in

the elder brother, who had never done anything palpably wrong, but had been a loyal son and a faithful worker all the days of his life. But Jesus believed in the younger one, and the world's sympathy goes in the same direction. You feel somehow there was that in him, in spite of his weaknesses, which made him superior to the elder brother. It was the belief of Jesus in them that transformed men more than their belief in Him.

And surely it is the same to-day. It is not so much what I believe, for I have been taught many things, as you have, and have had certain influences playing upon me all the time, as you have. It is not so much what we believe; that is half of the problem; but the real value lies in the response that comes to us from that in which we believe. In other words, a Christian is not a man who holds on to Jesus by a mere intellectual effort; a Christian is a man or woman in whom the Spirit of Jesus becomes manifest. Jesus may become manifest in a man or woman whose mental knowledge concerning Him is very vague and imperfect indeed.

I have been reading a book during the week by the Marquise da la Tour du Pin, who lived in the days of the French Revolution. It was not a book that attracted me for some time. She was one of the gay Court of Marie Antoinette; she lived her butterfly life, while France was reeling down to destruction; she was flitting from one ballroom to another, while hunger and despair were eating into

the hearts of the people. She was giving a banquet, as she puts it naively, of twenty dishes, while the Bastille was falling; she was living in the palace of the King, but did not know anything was wrong until she saw that motley mob, mostly of women, come surging out of Paris, demanding bread, and she only records that they filled her with disgust. Yet you cannot be angry with her; it was the way she had been brought up. She had always lived like that, devout in her religion (she had lived in the house of an Archbishop, though that did not mean much); she is not much to be blamed; she just did not know.

At last she escaped with her husband to America, where they lived on a farm. It was just there that something happened. She says:

“I was feeling very happy under these circumstances, when God struck me a most unexpected blow, and as I then imagined, the most cruel and terrible that one could endure. Alas, I have since experienced others which have surpassed it in severity. My little Seraphine was taken from us by a sudden illness very common in this part of the country—a kind of infant paralysis. She died in a few hours without losing consciousness. . . .

“There was no Catholic Priest either in Albany or in the neighbourhood. My husband, who did not wish to have a Protestant Minister called, himself performed the last rites for our child, and placed her in a little enclosure which had been arranged to serve

as a cemetery for the inhabitants of the farm. It was situated in the middle of our woods. Almost every day I went to kneel upon the grave, the last resting-place of the child whom I had so much loved, and it was there that God gave to me a change of heart.

"Up to this period of my life, although I was far from being irreligious, I had never taken much interest in religion. During the course of my education no one had ever spoken to me of religion. During the first years of my childhood, I had had under my eyes the worst possible examples. In the high society of Paris I had been witness of scandals, so often repeated that they had become familiar to me to the point of no longer moving me. In this way every thought of morality had been benumbed in my heart, but the hour had come when I had to recognize the hand which had smitten me.

"I do not know exactly how to describe the transformation which came over me. It seemed to me as if a voice cried out to me that I must change my whole being. Kneeling upon the grave of my child, I implored her to obtain from God, who had already recalled her to Him, my pardon and a little relief from my distress. My prayer was heard. God accorded me then the grace to know and serve Him. He gave me the courage to bend very humbly under the stroke which had smitten me and to prepare myself to support without complaining the new griefs by which in His justice He deemed it proper to try me in the future. From that day the divine will found me submissive and resigned."

Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, these do not matter very much when you get down to the real thing like that! It is in that way God is always dealing with men. We build churches, preach sermons, try different religious methods, like children playing with their building blocks. The great worker upon the hearts of men is the invisible silent Spirit, and only He knows how He transmutes that external meaningless belief into the character that merits confidence. We pay too much attention to the merely doctrinal side of our creed. I do not minimize its value, it makes all the difference to have a clear and pure teaching, but it is only half of the mystery after all. It is not so much whether I believe in God as whether God believes in me. I am not a Christian because I think it most probable that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God; I am a Christian rather if Jesus of Nazareth could have trusted me—can indeed trust me now.

In this City Temple one always has the consciousness that there are folk who gather from Sunday to Sunday, but who have little definite creedal belief. I want to say to you, "the essence of true Christianity is being worthy of the trust of Jesus Christ." Suppose that the great eternal Spirit in this world is a Spirit like that of Christ. Suppose that the last question that shall be asked of us, when life is over, and the greater light has dawned, shall be asked in the Spirit of Jesus of

Nazareth, will not the supreme thing be whether we have so lived as to have deserved His trust? You have your difficulties, but can you go away determined to try to live so that Jesus Christ would have trusted you, would have rested His cause in your hands, and believed that, in spite of all your weaknesses or your failings, you would remain loyal and carry through at last?

Let us try to live so that Jesus might reasonably believe in us. They whom Jesus could have believed in are usually those in whom others believe. When sufficient time has passed, we forget the idiosyncrasies of their belief and remember just **THAT!**

XIII

CHRIST'S MAN

By

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Frederick Franklin Shannon was born in Morris County, Kansas, February 11, 1877. He received his education at the Webb School, Bell Buckle, Tenn., and at Harvard University; was ordained a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1899; pastor Logan, W. Va., 1899-1900; Grace Methodist Church, Brooklyn, 1904-1912. In 1912, Dr. Shannon was called to the pastorate of the Reformed Church on The Heights, Brooklyn. Here he remained until 1919; he was called to the pulpit of historic Central Church, Chicago, as the last in that famous succession of great prophets—Hillis and Gunsaulus. Dr. Shannon is a pulpit genius. Practically a self-made man (in the best sense of the term), he is to-day one of the most brilliant preachers of modern times.

Among his published volumes are: *The Land of Beginning Again*, *The New Personality*, *The Soul's Atlas*, *The Enchanted Universe*, *The Infinite Artist*, *The Country Faith* and *The Economic Eden*.

XIII

CHRIST'S MAN¹

"But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—ROMANS 8:9.

PAUL has a fashion of penetrating into the very soul of reality. The text is a striking illustration of his method. He is considering the stamp of a genuine as contrasted with a spurious Christian. Laying aside conventionalities, he declares, in a swift lightning-stroke of thought, what constitutes the ultimate in discipleship. It is this: The Christian is a person possessing, and possessed by, the Spirit of Christ. Everything else is beside the mark. The issue is clear-cut. There is no haze, no half-lights, no soft-tinted suppositions. It is simply the difference between the quick and the dead, fact and fiction, make-believe and reality. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Here is the death-blow to mere professionalism, a kind of judgment-day's doom for clever excuses and popular trimming. Moreover, it is a challenge to our own time, which seems in a strait between the Emersonian and Father Taylor types of mind. The philosopher and the Methodist preacher were very dear friends, but lived in different sections of the

¹From "The Economic Eden."

spiritual universe. "Emerson," wrote Taylor, "is one of the sweetest creatures God ever made; there is a screw loose somewhere in the machinery, yet I cannot tell where it is, for I never heard it jar. He must go to heaven when he dies, for if he went to hell the devil would not know what to do with him. But he knows no more of the religion of the New Testament than Balaam's ass did of the principles of the Hebrew grammar." Now this is not just a discriminating and humorous statement. It is far more than that; it enables us to catch two souls in their attitude toward finalities. Intimate as they were, friends and lovers, able to respect and appreciate each other's individuality, yet the religion of the New Testament and Christ mark the line of separation for Emerson and Taylor. And, my friends, make no mistake—this is the line of separation for all of us. It is just a pointblank choice between the lower and the higher, the secondary and the essential, the good and the best. Here, then, is the gist of our present study—whether we have any right to accept the inferior ways of life and faith when the more excellent and superior are demanding a verdict.

I

By way of approach, we may say that the lesser meanings of Christianity partake of the impersonal. Dropping the negative in the text, it reads: "If any man have the spirit of Christ"—

that is, spirit is spelled with a small "s." It implies that the Christian is one under the influence of a man named Jesus, who lived and died in Palestine two thousand years ago. He was a good man—the best earth ever saw; he was a great man—the greatest among the sons of men. But he is dead and gone; the stars keep watch above his Syrian grave; he is a lovely memory, precious, but just a page in the sealed book of the past. This, I think, is an adequate statement of the impersonal phase of Christianity. Analyzed, this viewpoint breaks up into the following subdivisions:

1. Jesus is an atmosphere. The metaphor is excellent. Atmosphere is essential to physical well-being. A room is shut off from the outer world. Darkness, disease, and death hold carnival within. Why? For lack of atmosphere. Fling wide the doors, open the windows, and atmosphere, sweet, keen, health-bringing, comes smiting in with gently powerful pressure. So this idea of atmosphere as descriptive of Jesus on man and society is fine, but—impersonal. It marks the difference between the antique east and the modern west, between such religions and cults as Hinduism and Eddyism and New Testament and historic Christianity, to say nothing of the finer philosophies of the race.

2. Jesus is an example. This is better still. Example, we know, is one of the immeasurable factors in our human world. The example of the

parent, the friend, the scholar, the statesman, the preacher is so vast, so subtle that we have no accurate method of reckoning it. Thus certain men emphasize the example of Jesus. He befriended the outcast; He remembered the forgotten; He sought out the lost, as a shepherd seeks the one strayed lamb; He loved children and took them in His arms; He toiled with His hands; He entered into the joys of a wedding feast; He was august in His simplicity; He was majestic in His humility; He was compelling in His self-assertion; He was quietly masterful, and sometimes He was irresistibly indignant in the presence of injustice and unrighteousness. Yes; Jesus was a truly great and wonderful example. "Why not take Him as such?" asks the disciple of the inadequate view. Why? Just because example falls pathetically short of that full-toned vitality which bursts from the personal, with which the impersonal cannot be on intimate, friendly terms. Jesus as an example, merely, confronts us with the alternative of choosing the good, the second-rate, when it is our duty and privilege to choose the best and the supreme.

3. Jesus as a teacher. From the atmospheric to the exemplary the transition may not be marked, but it is important. It helps to distinguish some of the finer shades and tones in Christian thought. Thus Jesus the teacher occupies a separate brain compartment. Why not, says the lesser stand-

point, close with Jesus the teacher and settle the matter? He is the first schoolmaster of the race. Think of His morality, His views of God and man, His wealth of democracy, His international inclusiveness! Socrates was Greek, Cicero was Roman, Voltaire was French, Shakespeare was English, Kant was German, Emerson was American, but Jesus—well, He was opulently universal. His planet-wideness could not be obscured by His Palestinian garb and Aramaic speech. Why not, therefore, accept Him as our foremost teacher and have done with mental hair-splittings? Just because the facts drive us to something beyond—infinitely beyond—the teacher, however transcendent. For the general soul of man offers no deeper homage to the Christ than this: *He Himself is so interwoven with His Teaching that the truth and the person cannot be separated.* This is phenomenal in the history of mankind. Of what other figure does the soul make such rigid demands? It is enough for Plato to be identified with truth; we accept his truth and let Plato go; but truth and Jesus—they are one and indissoluble, now and forevermore. Who cares whether Socrates sometimes lost his temper and said harsh things to Xanthippe? We rather think, perhaps, that it was the philosopher's duty to "talk back." But we grant no such license to Jesus; we demand perfection of Him. The Christian consciousness is a hard master—so austere just, so whitely true that

it will have only One for Master and Lord, and One alone! He must be without blemish, terrible with moral splendour, free from fleck or taint.

Here, surely, is something unique in the history of thought and character: Truth is able to walk alone, unattended save by its own moral grandeur, except in the solitary instance of Jesus. Poetry could even dispense with Shakespeare and survive; song would be draped in mourning the rest of its years, but its heart-break would not be utterly incurable. Philosophy could drop the name of Immanuel Kant, tremendously significant as that name is, without permanent dislocation. Art would survive if Rembrandt's colours were taken from its canvases. Science would be sorely handicapped without the work of Darwin; but the loss of that imperial name from scientific categories and processes would not cause chaos in the physical universe. Except in the single case of Jesus Christ, truth is so absolute that its agent may be dispensed with; so impersonal that undue intrusion of the personal element is bad form. But truth and Jesus are so enmeshed and rooted in each other, that if a flaw is found in His person, the rafters of the Temple of Truth itself would come crashing down. Humanity could not survive the wound wrought by a false Christ; the moral universe would be wrecked by the shock of a meretricious Jesus. Let Solomon be a rake, and David play the fool, and Peter act the traitor, and John

lose his temper; but Jesus—let no dark stain mar the snow of His being, lest life itself become an idiot's tale and earth be found to rest upon painted fog-banks! Is not this demand which we make of our Saviour one of the mightiest tributes the soul could offer its Redeemer?

Moreover, this lower or second-rate interpretation of Christ not only partakes of the impersonal, but it is marked by a differentiating character-strain through the Christian centuries. For example, it has fostered the delusion that the Kingdom of God belongs to the intellectuals. It insists that a man must *think* his way into and through the spiritual kingdoms. Now it is the duty, of course, of every Christian to be a thinker; but if a man is just a thinker, operating an intellectual mental trap for the delight of seeing it open and shut, he is not only very far from the Kingdom of God, but he is so far that, until he changes his method of spiritual travel, he has no hope whatever of reaching even the outer confines of the Abode of the Blessed. Many spend so much time changing their intellectual clothes in preparation for the Christian feast that they are always just too late for the feast itself. Too often they come to the end of life mental incompetents as well as spiritual paupers. It is a solemn task to keep on speaking terms with mind and thought; but let us remember that the laws of mind require us to play fair; we cannot go intellectually hopping,

skipping, and jumping through our years without discovering, in the end of the day, that we have largely dissipated whatever thinking powers we may have had.

Besides the intellectualist the lesser viewpoint produces, also, a passionless type of discipleship. Well-pleased with life, it is distantly enraptured by the progress of mankind in general and of itself in particular. Unaware that there are agonies and heavens and hells in the universe and in the human heart, it jauntily acquiesces in the hope that "Somehow things will come out all right." Thus, putting nothing worth while into the world, it naturally draws nothing out. Such living declares no Christian dividends because it earns none. The fire of missionary activity never flames upon its hearth. To it, the dire disasters of sin are as nothing compared with the shallow reformations wrought to-day and forgotten to-morrow or the day after. Gliding smoothly along the broad highways of the non-essential, it is most timid in undertaking those great spiritual steeps gashed by Calvary, indented by the Tomb, and garlanded by Resurrection lilies. It has a positive genius for tracing great events and truths to secondary causes, when the First Cause is so reasonable that any but the spiritually blind are compelled to recognize it. And all the while this passionless, splendidly dead genus of discipleship is congratulating itself upon its modernity, pathetically unconscious that it is

just the twentieth century dupe of those outworn gnosticisms which flourished in Egypt, India, and Greece thousands of years ago. Having borrowed some present-day intellectual toggery, many of these vendors of the antique and exploded are selling their wares at bargain-counter prices and incidentally doing a land-office business. It is all beautifully inane, magnificently humbuggish, and Christlessly tragical.

II

If the lesser meanings attached to Christianity emphasize the impersonal, Christ's man emphatically asserts the personal. "If any man hath the Spirit of Christ," suppose we read it thus, "he is one of His." The small letter, the emasculated and undistinguishable, is flung into the background; that which ought to be capitalized, which is agelessly unique, swiftly occupies the front lines to wage a Christian warfare. After all, it is not the professional Christian who counts, much less the neutral dabbler in spiritual shallows. Rather is it the man possessed—the man reborn, renewed, risen—who knows he was greatly dead and who likewise knows that he is throbbingly alive in Christ Jesus—he is the man who wears well in this world and will thrive in any world to which his soul-business calls him. Consequently, this larger meaning of Christianity, like the smaller, manifests itself in certain splendid details.

1. Christ's man is he into whose personality the Christ is inwrought. Here we come upon a realm so mysterious and occult that it refuses to yield up its secret to clumsy philosophic and psychologic tools. Certainly we must try to apprehend and understand it; that is our duty as well as an essential part of our spiritual unfolding. Many, however, become so hypnotized by the process that they are undazzled by the reality. Now it is the fact we are considering, and the vibrant, transfiguring fact is in my text. What is it? Just this: That Christ Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, seizes the human personality and indwells it. This fact alone constitutes a Christian. The theology of it is another and different matter; the philosophy of it is just an effort to put decent mental clothing upon naked thought; the psychology of it is compellingly interesting but unquestionably secondary. Multitudes know the reality and are ignorant of its philosophy; multitudes, also, are experts in the philosophy, and strangers to the reality. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He may be Buddha's, or Zoroaster's, or Plato's, but he is not managed by the Final, he is not in companionship with the Ultimate, he is not possessed by the Supreme.

Now this is either truth or nonsense. And nonsense is at a premium in our time; why should truth be thrust out into the cold—a beggar whom

we refuse soul-lodging? As a sample of the kind of thinking that evokes applause, take this statement of Sir Oliver Lodge in his New York lecture: "Character persists after death. If we have no character, then our individual life merely goes back to the general stream of life like the vegetable and animal." Assuredly, character persists after death; but what a nice, easy method Sir Oliver has for getting rid of personality! If we have character, supposedly good, we survive after death; otherwise, we are merged into the general stream of vegetable and animal life. That is to say, an atom outlasts a soul. "Whip an atom from one end of the universe to the other," the brilliant Thomas Starr King was wont to say, "and it will remain an atom still." But, argues Sir Oliver, if we fail to achieve good character, we blandly discharge our moral obligations to God and man by subtly absconding out of the personal into the animal and vegetable kingdoms. What an inviting Mexico such realms would be to every wilfully moral insolvent and practiced scamp in the spiritual universe! Would he not escape thither with mocking joy, glad to leave his creditors and the hounds of justice in the lurch? Like much muddy thinking in our day, this kind forgets to distinguish between *character* and *personality*. Personality cannot be gotten rid of; it may be good or bad; it may be clothed in a Joseph's-coat-of-many-colours, but personality is on our hands,

on God's hands, forevermore. The worlds may be folded up like a garment, but personality is so alive with the stuff of Godhead, that it cannot be tucked away in some cozy corner, doomed to timeless inertia. Having laboured personality into being, at the command of God, the universe cannot modify its work, nor undo what has been done by Infinite Wisdom and Love.

At this juncture, also, Christ's man asks a question of the psychological researchers, spiritualistic mediums, and disciples of the ouija board. The question, in view of the stress which is placed upon the relatively unimportant, is fundamental: Why do so few of their cult make any effort to communicate with Christ? Beyond all question, if anybody has survived the grave, if anybody offers indisputable evidence of persistence in the unseen kingdoms, it is He. Thus, if humanity is on the verge of establishing some new method of communication with the world of spirits, is it not strange that more is not made of the One Person Who is readily accessible, Who challenges mankind to verify His claims, Who is eager to be communicated with? Until this is done, some of us will be compelled to keep our spiritual heads, pay tribute to reason, and practice the old but ever new method of climbing to the feet of God over the rungs of the unfallen ladder of Christian prayer, repentance, worship, forgiveness, faith, hope, and love. "Every one that hath heard from

the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me," says the Christ. Have you had authentic tidings from God? Have you learned the unlearned? Very well! What is the evidence of your mastery in eternal matters? That you rock a table? That you spend your days in trying to talk with some one who, in Time or Eternity, is very much of a human like yourself? Not at all! If you are expert in the high things of God, this is your unassailable credential—that you come to the King of Glory, Who opens the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Otherwise, you may succeed in getting yourself everlastingly classified in somewhat suspicious company. "He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep," says the Good Shepherd of the Immortal Sheepfolds, "but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

2. Christ's man is the playground of authentic spiritual power. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." The perplexed disciples were insistent upon minor propositions—times and seasons; our Lord held the major matters in the foreground—enriched personality and its secret. These are the essential facts for all men and for all time. How, in the best sense, to enrich personality, is the task of every human. We may push the subject into the background, giving it small chance in our tumultuous days, but some time we are as certain to be con-

vinced of its absoluteness as we are God-imaged men and women. Personality is all we finally retain; it is our wealth or woe; all the vanishings from us, all the clingings to us—these are meaningful only as they make the person rich or poor. Having laid the world away, we shall see ourselves as we are. The trappings of circumstance, the veneered excuses, the conventional apologies—all the current coin which rattles so loudly in our markets of hypocrisy, has no purchasing power whatsoever in the emporiums of reality. Therefore, power—power personalized—power that is the essence and quintessence of the highest and finest in the universe—power inbreathed and generated by the Holy Spirit—this is the true mark of Christ's man, who is not the victim of what William Watson calls "world-strangeness," but is at home in any world, because his Lord is Master and King of all worlds.

"Then," you say, "if this is so important, tell us how to obtain it, or receive it, or possess it." That is a noble request indeed—one that any servant of the Lord should be eager to comply with. I think I can tell you how to become an instrument of the Holy Spirit, how you may realize and illustrate in your own person what Professor Peabody has defined Christianity to be—"a form of power." The initial step has to do with sin—repenting of your sin, changing your mind, forsaking the thing you know to be wrong, unhallowed,

unworthy. You will find this a big job—much more than you contracted for, if you are in earnest. You will be forced to your knees—you will know wrestlings, agonies, misgivings. You may wet your pillow with your tears as you cry out in the night: “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” If your case is genuine, you will not think much of your possessions or your position, your culture or your crudeness, your youth or your age. You will feel the truth of that assertion of Professor James about the deliverance of all religions—that there is something wrong with you, and your wrongness is made right by connecting with the Higher Powers. Or, again, you may not be the subject of religious violence. You may be born from above as quietly as the new day arises upon the world, as noiselessly as summer’s green steals across the pasturelands, as softly as the dews of night kiss the faces of sleeping flowers. But beware! The still-born child is forever still. Striking the true Christian vein, we know that, in general, Christ’s man came somewhat violently rather than quietly into the Kingdom of God. Of this much be perfectly sure: He either knows *when* he was born from above, or else he knows that he is *alive now*. Life is splendid evidence that birth has taken place. Power—power in the will, power in the mind, power in the imagination—“ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you;” but—“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

“Christianity,” said Tennyson, “with its divine morality, but without the central figure of Christ, the Son of Man, would become cold.” In verification of the truth of the poet’s statement, many a professed disciple’s spiritual temperature has dropped several degrees below zero. And all because he tried to make Christianity just one more of the world-philosophies, instead of enjoying its life-giving vitalities, of experiencing the thrill of its power-inspiring energies.

3. Christ’s man is clothed with an unworldly peace. One of the supreme moments of history, surely, was that in which the Master promised His peace to the disciples. Calamity had shocked them to the centers of their being; their world seemed to topple down in ruins and chaos; they were like frightened folk of the woodlands pursued by destroying hounds. But hark! The chimes of un-earthly peace begin to peal forth in that troubled hour. Peter’s fear vanished; John’s perplexity took wings; James was lifted out of his practicalities into tranquillizing ideals. “Peace I leave with you”—a testament which will outlast Cæsar’s dominions; “My peace I give unto you”—the inmost Soul of the Universe shall gently enfold you in His protecting care; “not as the world giveth, give I unto you”—the world gives gorgeous illusions, I bequeath spiritual substance. Therefore, “let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” For Christ’s man knows that His peace

is not a dead, lifeless calm, an unruffled emptiness, but something fiery and glowing, a creative serenity which refuses to be disturbed by all the tumults of earth and time. It enables one to perceive, with George Fox, that there is "an ocean of darkness and death; but withal, an infinite ocean of light and love which flows over that of darkness." A man said to me, as we were looking out over the park near his home: "It is lovely here in summer. Sometimes I can hardly go to business for watching the children play. As many as fifty nurses, with their happy-hearted little ones, may be seen down there in the grass and under the trees on fine mornings." It was the dead of winter when he spoke. Snow was on the ground; the trees wore no "nests of robins in their hair"; the music of childhood's laughter could not be heard. But my friend's words and face instantly suggested two aspects of peace. First, there was the quick, riotous, innocent peace of children at play. It was an intervital peace—a peace wrought of summer mornings, of singing birds, of perfumed gardens, of green trees. Lovely, it was external; enchanting, it was a matter of environment; sweetly innocent, it was unrelated to character. The man's face told a different story. It was the playground of many a storm arched by spiritual rainbows; many a temptation had left its imprint there, as well as many a victory; he had companioned sorrow and joy, failure and triumph, doubt and faith—a gal-

lant, masterful human who had fought and won the good fight, serenely westward bound. Such, I take it, is the tribute God commands the years to pay lofty human character. For Christ's peace at last stations the soul upon the skull of the brute; grants spiritual equilibrium in a universe of terrific motion and mystery; abstracts deepest joy from bitterest sorrow; turns apparent death into a jubilate of life. Therefore, if any man hath the Spirit of Christ, he is one of His—one of His redeemed, one of His deathless, one of His music-makers, one of His hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that have been purchased out of the earth. Christ's man is the final incense the universe gives back to God.

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